

**THE CULTURAL
REVOLUTION
AT THE MARGINS**

CHINESE SOCIALISM IN CRISIS



YICHING WU

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*This book is dedicated to my parents,
Wu Feng and Xu Guoguang*

A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre—a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, and overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of dispersion.

—MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

The history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when a historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only “permanent” victory breaks their subordination, and that not even immediately.

—ANTONIO GRAMSCI, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Author's collection
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCRG	Central Cultural Revolution Group
CCRM	Center for Chinese Research Materials
CMC	Central Military Committee
CRDB	<i>Chinese Cultural Revolution Database</i>
KMT	Kuomintang
MZDWG	<i>Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao</i> [Writings of Mao Zedong since the founding of the PRC]
MZDZ	<i>Mao Zedong zhuan</i> [Biography of Mao Zedong]
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMRB	<i>Renmin ribao</i> [People's daily]
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SMPC	Shanghai Municipal Party Committee
WGHQ	Workers' General Headquarters
ZYWXXB	<i>Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian</i> [Selected important documents since the founding of the PRC]

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Cultural Revolution was arguably the most profound crisis that socialist China had ever undergone. The spectacle of widespread rebel attacks on the party-state authorities, instigated by the head of that apparatus, was extraordinary. In a letter to his wife, Jiang Qing, dated July 8, 1966, on the eve of the ferocious Red Guard movement, Mao Zedong remarked, “I possess both some of the spirit of the tiger and some of the monkey. But it is the tiger spirit which is the dominant, and the monkey spirit secondary.” In traditional Chinese cultural symbolism, the monkey or Monkey King was the trickster figure that transgressed boundaries and defied authorities, while the tiger represented reverence for authority and imperial power. Disclosing Mao’s complex state of mind as he was entering his last great battle, this intriguing statement marked Mao’s inherently contradictory role as both the chief of China’s Leninist party-state and the rebel leader, and uncannily foreshadowed the zigzagging and volatile course of the Cultural Revolution, in which eruption and containment, popular radicalization and political recentralization, and rebellion and suppression were closely intertwined.

In this book, I tell the story of the disobedient, recalcitrant little monkeys or Monkey Kings that were unleashed and then herded back into the cage by Mao, the Great Leader. When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, largely as a revolution from above, Mao had little sense of a clear-cut course of action. Although numerous Red Guards and rebels looked to the Maoist

leadership for political guidance, the relationships between the purportedly omnipotent Mao and those who earnestly responded to his call were highly complicated and fragile. With the brief breakdown of the party hierarchy and propaganda apparatus, political messages transmitted from above were interpreted in different ways by different agents. In responding to ambiguous or even contradictory central policies, rebel activists also responded to their own immediate socioeconomic and political circumstances, and many who had long been discontented with China's state-socialist institutions burst into the once tightly controlled political arena. Giving expression to a myriad of grievances, the forces unleashed by Mao often took on lives of their own, and some young activists eventually began to question the dominant political order and challenge its fundamental ideological premises. The disorder caused by mass political activism from below and power paralysis at the top created a momentous crisis that the Maoist leadership decided had to be resolutely resolved.

This book is a history of the Cultural Revolution from the perspective of its unruly margins, written with the purpose of better understanding and recuperating a moment of political and ideological possibilities that have been silenced in conventional history and understudied in existing scholarship. Exploring what may be considered a decentered account of the Cultural Revolution, this book attempts to give voices and historical visibility to those otherwise consigned to the peripheries of the movement, where the discontented, disadvantaged, and excluded pressed their demands by creatively exploiting the paralysis of the political order. It explores how ruptural moments developed, political boundaries were reinterpreted and contested, transgressive forces were reworked or partially appropriated, and the dominant system, in neutralizing dissent or absorbing fissures, underwent transformations. With a focus on the rise and fall of the unruly and transgressive currents, this book argues that the more radical political possibilities of the Cultural Revolution were pressed by young grassroots critics and activists who questioned the movement's proclivity for attacking individual bureaucrats and putatively bourgeois ideas and customs. Their democratic and antibureaucratic impulses were accompanied by an acute concern with the organization of power in a socialist state. Quashing the restless rebels as early as late 1967, Maoist politics cannibalized its own children and exhausted its once explosive energy. The demobilization of freewheeling mass politics after late 1967 constituted part of the process of restoring the centralized authority of the temporarily disabled party-state and became the starting point of a series of crisis-coping maneuvers that I argue eventually led to the historic changes in the social, economic, and political life in post-Mao China.

Focusing on political and ideological emergence from below, this book is a history of the Cultural Revolution from a bottom-up perspective, as well as a critical inquiry into the historical origins of China's postsocialist transformation. The analysis provided in this book allows us to interpret the post-Mao reform as part of a continuous process of political maneuvers to contain, suppress, neutralize, and displace the prevalent crises and transgressions that resulted from the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, when the mass movements unleashed by Mao "skidded off course" (to borrow a well-known phrase from the historiography of the French Revolution) and threatened to undermine the institutional foundation of the party-state. In contrast to the conventional wisdom that views post-Mao China's historic political and economic changes as being in radical opposition to Mao's utopian last revolution, I argue that the origins of the momentous changes that have radically transformed contemporary Chinese society since the late 1970s and early 1980s can be traced, at least partly, to the height of the Cultural Revolution in 1967–1968, when the turn toward demobilization of the mass movement and restoration of party and state organizations became hardly mistakable.

This book has had a long history. My interest in the Cultural Revolution and the Mao era grew out of a protracted intellectual detour that first began in the late 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century when I was conducting research on the penetration of commercial culture into the Chinese academia and its impact on intellectual identity and politics. At that time, I stumbled on the intense and extraordinarily rich intellectual and political debates that were percolating in the Chinese scholarly world. Circulated largely through the fledgling Chinese Internet under highly restrictive political conditions imposed by the state's censorship apparatus, these debates represented attempts to rethink China's postsocialist transformation, and they profoundly fractured the broad but fragile ideological consensus on modernization, market-based economic development, and the farewell to revolution that had characterized China's political-intellectual field since the early 1980s. History, it suddenly appeared, was no longer quite at its happy end, as Francis Fukuyama had once complacently proclaimed.

At that time, I became intensely attracted by the vibrancy and inventiveness of these critical reflections on the historical meaning of revolution, reform, and the so-called market transition. In the meantime, however, I also had a deep sense of unease with what I saw as a critical void or lacuna, that is, the virtual absence of a historiographically grounded and analytically rigorous understanding of the historical experience and legacy of Chinese socialism in the discussions by many critics of "capitalism with Chinese characteristics." I was troubled in particular by what appeared to

be the unfortunate correlate of this historiographical and political lacuna, that is, the underdevelopment of a vigorous self-critique of China's revolutionary and socialist past. Contemporary progressive critics have often invoked romantic or sanitized images of the past as the historical counterpoint or alternative to developing an oppositional discourse to contest the dominant neoliberal ideological formation. At issue here is not merely our scholarly curiosity about the undisclosed Maoist past, often tightly locked up in government vaults. Rather, how we understand capitalist-oriented developments in contemporary China (or the "restoration of class power," as David Harvey has famously called them) depends crucially on the ways in which we understand the contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertain historical trajectories that characterized Chinese socialism in the Mao era. Such a critical history of China's socialist past (and of the Cultural Revolution in particular) necessitates, as I hope to demonstrate in this book, a fresh perspective from the margins—a point of view less burdened by the tyrannizing epistemological effects of centralized and centralizing powers. A history of the Cultural Revolution approached from the perspective of the margins is essential to the endeavor of tracing and excavating the wide range of illegitimate, buried, or subjugated practices and knowledges constitutive of a long-neglected tradition of political criticism and oppositional imagination. This incipient tradition of popular dissent, I believe, not only had the potential to produce a vigorous critique of the Leninist party-state that dominated post-1949 Chinese society and politics but also is uniquely capable of inspiring an alternative standpoint of analysis and critique vis-à-vis China's postsocialist transformation. As I will argue in the Epilogue, our criticism of capitalist developments in contemporary China calls for a much more robust critique of actually existing socialism, a relentless immanent critique, so to speak. The ultimate aim of this book is to suggest that a coherent *dual criticism*—a critique of both capital and state, of the logic of economic accumulation and bureaucratic power, and a fuller understanding of their complex historical and structural entanglements—is not only imperative but also possible. Over the years, I have attempted to work through these scholarly and intellectual conundrums in the belief that a critical understanding of the Cultural Revolution is crucial for the development of a vigorous critique of China's postsocialist present, and that socialist revolution and capitalist restoration, and the past and the present, should be investigated as integral parts of a single historical and analytic framework. This book represents the provisional outcome of such an inquiry.

Sources of information about the Cultural Revolution in general, and about its heterodox, illicit, or subterranean currents in particular, are scattered and often unreliable. Although the Chinese government's archival

regulations stipulate that materials from the era of the People's Republic of China that are more than thirty years old should be made open, in practice a great many documents have remained closed to the public. In spite of numerous open and hidden roadblocks imposed by the state on Cultural Revolution scholarship, which is considered politically sensitive, it is always possible for a diligent historian to find useful sources. Although information concerning the Mao era (especially the 1950s and early 1960s) in local archives has become more accessible, access to Cultural Revolution-era materials is still highly restricted and in many cases virtually nonexistent. Selected materials available for public and scholarly consumption have often been prescreened to make sure that official interpretations of history will not be undermined by damaging historical evidence. In this respect, its vast locked sections notwithstanding, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, from which I collected a large amount of information for this project, is arguably one of the best-run and most open facilities in China, even though during the last year or two it seems to have tightened restrictions considerably. The Hunan Provincial Library in Changsha charges hefty fees for access and duplication, but it houses one of the largest collections in the country of precious primary materials about the local history of the Cultural Revolution, including Red Guard newspapers, posters, handbills, pamphlets, transcripts of leadership meetings and speeches, investigation reports, written confessions, and even interrogation records. In addition to library collections and government archives, valuable historical materials can also be obtained from used-book dealers, flea markets, online sellers, or private collectors, often by sheer serendipity.

Research for this book was conducted during many trips to China. I have collected a wide variety of sources, including national and local newspapers, government documents, Red Guard publications, archival materials, published and unpublished memoirs, and interviews with participants and witnesses. I have also taken advantage of the vast increase since the 1990s in the documentation relevant to the activities of political agents in national and local bureaucracies, such as publications of internal documents, biographies and chronologies of political figures, and transcripts of official speeches and meetings, as well as local gazetteers and party histories, which provide sketchy but valuable information about the Cultural Revolution and the Mao era.

I have also benefited immensely from two massive collections of Cultural Revolution primary sources, both compiled and edited by teams led by Song Yongyi (fondly known as Lao Song or "Old Song"), an extraordinarily dedicated librarian-cum-scholar. One of the most valuable sources for the study of the Cultural Revolution is the vast collection of documents

in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database* (published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2002, 2006, 2010), which contains more than 40,000 historical documents amounting to over 35 million Chinese characters—an amount of information equivalent to hundreds of printed volumes. The database brings together a wealth of primary sources from the Cultural Revolution and the Mao era, most of which were previously scattered among libraries, archives, and private collections across the world. They include party leaders' speeches and writings, party and government announcements, internal documents, official media commentaries, Red Guard publications, and other firsthand material, such as self-criticisms, confessions, appeals, pleas, and suicide notes produced by ordinary people. In addition, adding to several smaller reprint collections of Red Guard materials published in the 1970s and 1980s, *A New Collection of Red Guard Newspapers*, edited by Song Yongyi and his colleagues, totals 112 volumes and over 35,000 large-format pages. Without the indefatigable work of Song Yongyi in collecting and compiling these materials and making them available to the scholarly community, this book would not have been possible.

I have accrued a heavy debt of gratitude to many wonderful people, and I hope this book as a whole will be taken as a kind of thanks to their support during these years. First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Marshall Sahlins, Judith Farquhar, Prasenjit Duara, and Jean Comaroff, who mentored and supported me. Marshall Sahlins's influence on my intellectual evolution was critical. The ideas that originally motivated this project—that conventional or hegemonic meanings are often at risk in action, that contingent circumstances of action need not conform to the significance that some group, however powerful it may be, might assign to them, and that time and again people creatively revalue or transform their conventional schemes—were centrally inspired by Sahlins's seminal anthropological history of event and structural change. Judith Farquhar offered her support at a critical moment when my work on the Chinese intellectual culture and politics was badly stalled as I became irrepressibly interested in the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. My transition to a new project, from which this book has evolved, could not have been successful without her guidance. Special thanks are owed to David Scott, who, through the political theory reading group that he organized during his brief time at Chicago, managed to sow the seeds that later blossomed into an intellectual crisis, of which this book represents the resolution. I also want to express my gratitude to the late Bernard Cohn and George Stocking, whose foundational scholarship in joining historical and anthropological inquiries had a formative impact on the development of my intel-

lectual sensibility. That I have finally completed a book on a deeply historical subject—one that was not at all planned at the beginning but emerged slowly as the combined result of my intellectual growth and political engagement—should be taken as a small token of tribute to their inspiration.

At the University of Chicago, I benefited tremendously from many conversations with Zhou Yuan and Wang Youqin, who have shared their insights and expertise in the study of the Cultural Revolution. From 2007 to 2009, I was a Fellow at the University of Michigan Society of Fellows and taught in Michigan's Graduate Program of Anthropology and History. The fellowship provided a vibrant scholarly environment, as well as the initial opportunity for recasting a rough manuscript into book form. Since 2009, I have been teaching in the Department of East Asian Studies and the Asian Institute at the University of Toronto. I have discussed the ideas in this book in classrooms and have benefited greatly from the fruitful exchanges I have had with intellectually inquisitive students at both Michigan and Toronto.

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During the long personal intellectual journey from my original idea to the final book manuscript, my family has been my bedrock. My parents, Wu Feng and Xu Guoguang, have lived through my long journey with faith and love. My wife, Zheng Mingyu, has been with me throughout the entire process, with all its ups and downs. I want to thank her for the unconditional support and endless patience during my many years of unreasonable stubbornness and maddening procrastination when I was fumbling my way through intellectual and political darkness. For all these years, she has always been my first reader or listener. Without her unfailing love and constant encouragement, this project would never have arrived at this point.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AT THE MARGINS

THE UNTHINKABLE REVOLUTION

WHY SHOULD WE even bother with the dusty Cultural Revolution today? Nearly four decades after its end, there seems little left to be said about the origins, processes, and significance of this pivotal historical episode. Yet not so long ago, China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was widely admired as one of the greatest and most important events of the twentieth century. Many viewed this tumultuous movement, which proudly announced itself as a mass war against social inequalities and bureaucratic privileges, as having raised a number of issues crucial not only to the modern Chinese Revolution in particular but also to the history of socialism and revolutions in general: How, for example, does a new privileged class rise at the very heart of a new revolutionary state? Is the aim of the revolution merely to build up the wealth and power of the nation, or is it to create a genuinely egalitarian society? Is a vanguardist party the most effective means of constructing a socialist society, or is that the initiative of the broader masses?

In the late 1960s, China's Cultural Revolution generated worldwide interest and excitement. For many, the Cultural Revolution—its violence and cult fundamentalism notwithstanding—was a radical political event embodying a wellspring of revolt and new forms of collectivity that disrupted dominant political structures.¹ A symbol of revolutionary vision untarnished by bureaucratized Soviet socialism, Mao's continuous revolution seemed to have tackled boldly the problem of how, after the revolution, the people

collectively could secure and further advance the revolutionary cause. Attempting a “revolutionary reactivation of the Paris Commune,” wrote Alain Badiou, arguably the most important living French philosopher today, the Cultural Revolution marked the “ideological opposition between creative revolutionary Marxism and retrograde statism” and constituted “the only true political creation of the sixties and seventies.”² Maoism, in the words of Fredric Jameson, was “the richest of all the greatest new ideologies of the 60s,” and the Cultural Revolution marked the late 1960s as a political moment of “universal liberation, a global unbinding of energies.” The figure of Mao and the Cultural Revolution, for Jameson, “evokes the emergence of a genuine mass democracy from the breakup of the older feudal and village structures, and from the therapeutic dissolution of the habits of those structures in cultural revolutions.”³ In the radical political milieu of the late 1960s and early 1970s, China’s Cultural Revolution seemed to support the belief of many left-wing intellectuals that revolutions not only are necessary but also can be genuinely revolutionary.

Like Mao’s preserved corpse in the Tiananmen Square mausoleum, however, the Cultural Revolution now seems more dead than ever. As China rises to become the world’s fastest-developing economy, the rusty nails of history seem to have been hammered into the coffin long ago. Although great historical events often lead to unsolvable controversies in historiography, with respect to China’s Cultural Revolution, as Italian scholar Alessandro Russo agonized, “one deals with an almost total intellectual block, . . . [and] a fundamental unanimity in discarding any hypotheses beyond the familiar ‘horrors of totalitarianism,’ leading ineluctably to catastrophe and disaster, essentially the worst repetition of the worst that had already happened elsewhere.” It is exactly this sense of frustration that led Russo to ask poignantly, “What makes it so difficult to discover any rational content in the Chinese Cultural Revolution?”⁴

For many, questions like this are a non sequitur because what has been called Mao’s “last revolution” was simply a case of revolutionary insanity, embodying nothing but chaos and violent destruction. The familiar motif of suffering and loss is typically articulated in the view that the episode resulted in nothing but “loss of culture and of spiritual values; loss of status and honor; loss of career and dignity; loss of hope and ideals; loss of time, truth, and of life; loss, in short, of nearly everything that gives meaning to life.”⁵ The Cultural Revolution has frequently been compared to the Nazi Holocaust. “When the history of the twentieth century is written,” the Chinese writer Feng Jikai wrote in his highly popular book *Ten Years of Madness*, “the most heavily laden language imaginable will be used to record its two greatest human tragedies: the atrocities of the Fascist reign, and the

calamities of the Cultural Revolution.”⁶ “Another disaster like that would surely mean the destruction of our nation,” wrote Ba Jin, one of China’s most eminent writers, in his plea for the creation of a Cultural Revolution museum. “Everyone owes it to their children and the future to leave a monument to the harrowing lessons of the past. ‘Don’t let history repeat itself’ should not be an empty statement.”⁷ In isolating the past from the present, we are often led to view the Cultural Revolution as inexplicably extraordinary or mysterious—as “the era of madness” (*fengkuang de nian-dai*). The explanation of historical events as the result of insanity is really an indication of intellectual impotence; it is another way of confessing that we are incapable of offering intelligible explanations.

But in disputing the simplemindedness of such narratives, I believe that we also must not underestimate their remarkably tenacious ideological power. Since the early 1980s, there have been concerted efforts to reduce the extraordinary complexity of the Cultural Revolution to the simplicity almost exclusively of barbarism, violence, and human suffering. Flattening historical memory of the Cultural Revolution through moralistic condemnation and exhortation, these narratives not only deprive an immensely important and complex episode of modern Chinese history of its multilayered historicity but also provide the discursive ground for delegitimizing China’s revolutionary history of the twentieth century. For many, the disasters of the Cultural Revolution have become emblematic of the bankruptcy of the Chinese Revolution as a whole. The withering away of a grand twentieth-century revolutionary narrative must surely raise questions about the legitimacy of continuous revolution, and vice versa.⁸ Indeed, we know very well that one of the chief functions of ideology is precisely that it collapses historical temporality into a narrative of inevitable disaster (or progress), as though Marx always leads to Stalin, or the Chinese Revolution inescapably brings about the Cultural Revolution.⁹

Equally important, this simplifying logic also supplies the crucial justification for what often has been complacently referred to as China’s “second revolution,” that is, its transition to a market economy and incorporation into global capitalism. The Cultural Revolution serves as the pivotal historiographical category that grounds the historical and political meaning of the post-Mao reform and opening up. The hagiography of Chinese postsocialism—the triumphant “China model” of rapid economic development and apparent political stability—has thrived on a virtually inexhaustible stock of stories that portray the Cultural Revolution as an episode of unspeakable disaster. By making market reform and modernization appear both desirable and inevitable, post-Mao narratives of the Cultural Revolution are central to the construction of the historical identity

of the reform era and legitimize the ideologically motivated discourse of transition.

What is puzzling is not that the dominant historical narrative involves political presuppositions. For better or worse, our readings of the past are vitally dependent on our experience of the present, and the act of writing history cannot transcend history and therefore is itself history. Nowhere is the tired dictum “Every history is a history of the present” truer than in the case of the Cultural Revolution. Its historiographical reception has closely mirrored the vicissitudes of contemporary politics. In this regard, Russo’s aforementioned intervention is indicative of a larger trend that has been emerging. Over three decades after China ventured down the path of capitalist marketization, the bleak reality of growing socioeconomic disparity, environmental degradation, massive layoffs of workers in state-owned enterprises, evisceration of social protections, rampant official corruption and illicit appropriation of public property, and superexploitation of rural migrant labor has led to the unraveling of the broad but fragile consensus regarding the direction and rationality of post-Mao reforms that dominated Chinese intellectual discussions of the 1980s. The erosion of the dominant historical narrative has been affected by the growing awareness since the late 1990s that reform and modernization have not delivered their promised common prosperity for the whole Chinese people, who have been increasingly polarized between two nations, one of a small number of the rich and powerful and the other of those who have lost out.¹⁰ In the late 1970s, China was undeniably one of the most egalitarian countries in the world, but in less than three decades, the country became, according to a leading expert on social inequality, “one of the most unequal societies in the world, with the fastest growing inequality recorded among major regions in the late twentieth century.”¹¹ It was estimated that in 2007 China had a Gini coefficient (a standard index of income inequality) of 0.496, surpassing even those of the United States, Brazil, and Uganda.¹² In 2011, according to a popular annual ranking of the wealthiest individuals in China, there were 271 billionaires in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (up from 189 in 2010), a higher number than in any other country except the United States.¹³ In 2009, several Chinese newspapers were censored by the government for reporting that wealth in China is concentrated in a small number of very rich people. The controversial figures, reportedly from official researchers, include a claim that 70 percent of China’s wealth is concentrated in the hands of just 0.4 percent of the population, and that 91 percent of multi-millionaires are the children of top officials.¹⁴

The emergent context of widening socioeconomic schisms, increasingly sharp social and political antagonisms, and a pervasive sense of impending

crises has brought such seemingly old, dusty subjects as the Mao era and the Cultural Revolution back to life and has endowed them with new political significance. The popular revival of Mao in the 1990s coincided with the Chinese government's policy of accelerating privatization of the national economy, which unleashed massive corruption and dismantled the Maoist social compact of guaranteed employment and welfare (the "iron rice bowl").¹⁵ Rather than the disaster that justifies the post-Mao turn toward the market path, the events of the late 1960s have become for a growing number of people an icon of inspiration and an alternative standpoint of political critique. The Cultural Revolution was launched over four decades ago in order to prevent the degeneration of Chinese socialism, which Mao foresaw as an imminent danger. After the end of the Mao era, however, this was precisely what happened as China under Deng Xiaoping—a prime target of the Cultural Revolution—embarked on a meandering path that has led to its incorporation into the capitalist world-system. There is clearly a historical irony here, if only in hindsight. Since the late 1990s, the Cultural Revolution, condemned as the "ten lost years" for much of the post-Mao era, has become the subject of renewed intellectual interest as scholars and critics attempt to rethink both the historical meanings and the contemporary political relevance of the period.¹⁶

The endeavor to unsettle the dominant ideological paradigm and historical narrative, however, faces an uphill battle. Obstacles include not only what Russell Jacoby diagnosed as "social amnesia"¹⁷—the past fallen prey to the social and economic dynamic of capitalist modernity and denuded of its critical content—but also, and equally important, the Chinese state's aggressive attempts to police or suppress scholarship on the Cultural Revolution. Why do the powerful fear history and seek to dominate memory? In the case of the Cultural Revolution, the state's intention is not mysterious. The history of the Cultural Revolution is censored for the unabashed purpose of curbing *luan*—"chaos" or uncontrollable public disturbances—and of preventing the repoliticization of a subversive or even potentially explosive subject at a time of prevalent social and political uncertainty, despite the appearance of economic prosperity. "The order of history," to quote from the philosopher Eric Voegelin's famous motto, "emerges from the history of order" and, I add, also from the history of quelling disorder. The contemporary political significance of the historical episode in question was revealed very clearly in the words of an officer of the Ministry of State Security, China's secret police organ. This officer was in charge of a team of agents who detained me when I was researching the archives in Changsha, the provincial capital city of Hunan. After several days and nights of intensive questioning, the officer asked whether I understood

why the study of the Cultural Revolution “has always been the concern of state-security organs.” After I expressed bewilderment, he replied as follows: “Let me explain why to you. The Cultural Revolution was an unprecedented social movement that negatively affected the lives of tens of millions of Chinese. It destabilized the party and disrupted the political life of the state. Now, when the course of ‘reform and opening up’ is not going too smoothly, when there are many disgruntled people for one reason or another, the hostile elements inside China and abroad will then attempt to take advantage of the memory and knowledge of the Cultural Revolution to make trouble for us. This is why the study of the Cultural Revolution is a matter of state security.”

The state’s concern for security may be justified by the ominous reality of proliferating social antagonisms in China. Nationwide, cases of “mass incidents”—a euphemism for protests, riots, and other forms of unrest—escalated from fewer than 10,000 in 1993 to 15,000 in 1997, 32,000 in 1999, 50,000 in 2002, 58,000 in 2003, 74,000 in 2004, and 87,000 in 2005.¹⁸ By 2010, the number of protests and riots reportedly had more than doubled again, to 180,000.¹⁹ The deep disaffection of those left behind by China’s rapid economic development is often rooted in a historical experience obscured by the dominant discourse. The danger posed by the country’s socialist and revolutionary past to the current sociopolitical order is evident, as shown in a popular ditty:

Beijing relies on the [Party] Center,
Shanghai on its connections,
Guangzhou leans on Hong Kong,
The drifting population lives by Mao Zedong Thought.²⁰

Since the late 1980s, China has witnessed “at first a fitful and then a nationwide revival of interest in Mao Zedong.”²¹ Fueled by simmering anger at corrupt officials and pressed by severe socioeconomic difficulties, workers at state-owned enterprises have responded with waves of protests that often appeal to notions of justice characteristic of the Mao era. “Cadre-masses relations have become extremely tense,” remarked a truck driver in the northeastern city of Shenyang, as recorded in Ching Kwan Lee’s study of labor unrest: “The most important thing is that today’s workers have no power, the power that Mao gave workers, the power to criticize the director and to write big-character posters. Now it’s illegal to write big-character posters. They will arrest you.” “If the Cultural Revolution came again,” another worker stated, “these corrupt cadres would all be executed many times.”²² Interestingly, similar political sentiments have been expressed in different ways by those who hardly admire the Cultural

Revolution. If the rampant inequalities and the corruption of officials are not curbed, Premier Wen Jiabao warned ominously in 2012, “the Cultural Revolution may occur again.” “Every party member and cadre,” Wen solemnly urged, “must feel a great sense of urgency.”²³ Shortly after Premier Wen’s remarks, Tencent, one of the largest Chinese web portal and social network sites, conducted an online survey on “how to combat the unhealthy trend [*wai feng*] of Cultural Revolution nostalgia.” Unexpectedly, 78 percent of all respondents (50,392 out of 64,794) responded that they were in some way “nostalgic” (*huai nian*) about the Cultural Revolution era.²⁴

At a critical juncture when mounting social antagonisms threaten to destabilize the state, the regime is preoccupied with its own history, seen as an important facet of state ideology to be vigorously policed in the service of modernization and stability.²⁵ The key event in the construction of the official interpretation of the Cultural Revolution was the 1981 party document with the seemingly benign title *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the PRC*, according to which the Cultural Revolution was a “ten-year turmoil” that was responsible for “the most severe setback and heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state, and the people since the founding of the People’s Republic.”²⁶ Since the 1980s, “turmoil” or “disaster” has been firmly established as the master trope in both official interpretation and popular understanding of the Cultural Revolution, reinforced by vigorous state censorship on the subject. Declaring itself the final word on the subject, the *Resolution* marked the subject as lying in the tightly secured domain of state-owned history and therefore off limits to public discussions and scrutiny. Several government guidelines regarding the compilation of local gazetteers stipulated that in regard to “important political events” after 1949, such as the Cultural Revolution and the Anti-Rightist Campaign, it was imperative to follow closely the officially sanctioned version of history so that “the image of the Party is not harmed.” The ingenious prescription, then, is to “write sketchily rather than in great detail” (*yi cu bu yi xi*).²⁷ According to a directive issued by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Propaganda Department, publication and circulation of books about the Cultural Revolution may have “a negative impact on society.” “In view of the [CCP] Center’s consistent spirit of uniting as one, looking forward, and dealing with historical matters in a broad and sketchy rather than punctilious way,” the directive included, among others, the following injunction: “Under normal circumstances, one should not plan to publish titles specifically researching or telling the history of the ‘Great Cultural Revolution.’” Permission to publish such works “should be sought by local publishing firms from provincial Propaganda Departments and by central publishing firms from the superior ministry under which they

belong.” These superior bodies should in turn “carry out a rigorous investigation” and “apply for final permission to publish from the State Press and Publications Administration and the Central Propaganda Department.”²⁸ Offenses, the directive warned, “are to be punished either by confiscation of profits, by fines, and/or by holding the leadership responsible.”²⁹ These warnings are not toothless. In 1997, *Dongfang* (The Orient), an influential journal established by a group of prominent intellectuals, was shut down for planning to publish a special issue on the Cultural Revolution.³⁰ In 2007, a national documentary film festival was abruptly suspended because one of the forty films that had entered the competition was about a specific episode of the Cultural Revolution. The filmmaker who produced the documentary reportedly was also placed under police surveillance.³¹ Restrictive or prohibitive policies like these have for the most part lasted for the past three decades despite shifting government tolerance or uneven enforcement. Such attempts at erasure or negation of the Cultural Revolution—in the spirit of dehistoricization and depoliticization—may be illustrated best by Deng Xiaoping’s statement that “the resolution of historical problems is for unity and for looking toward the future. There is no need to get tangled with the old accounts. It is more appropriate to solve important historical problems in general terms rather than to fuss about the particulars.”³²

From the Margins: A Historiographical and Interpretive Detour

The project of unsettling dominant narratives raises thorny historical and methodological questions. How do we make the Cultural Revolution thinkable as both a historical and a political object? From where do we draw historical resources, inspirations, and a sense of alternatives and possibilities? History and historicization, yes—but what and whose history, and how? From an epistemological point of view, the meaning of any historical object is always politically contested and discursively overdetermined. The historian’s task of critically rethinking the Cultural Revolution is not simply to truthfully re-create the past but also, as importantly, to critically scrutinize its very concept, that is, the way in which history can be defined or thought at all.

This book addresses the issue of how to make the Cultural Revolution thinkable, if only tangentially, through a historiographical and interpretive detour. In doing so, I choose not to simply reverse the conventional wisdom of the total repudiation of the Cultural Revolution, as many have already done. Nor do I proceed by disputing the ideological premises of the

conventional approach, which other scholars have done admirably.³³ My agenda is considerably less ambitious. Instead of asking directly whether the Cultural Revolution had a rational content and how we can retrieve its politics and legacy, I shall instead ask: Where may we locate its rational content and proper conceptuality? What was denied about rationality and historicity? And how did this denial come about, and how has such denial or erasure conditioned our historical understanding?

In his laudable attempt to recuperate the legacy of the twentieth-century Chinese Revolution, the late historian Maurice Meisner adopted a particular strategy of historical interpretation: separating intention from circumstance and ideal or purpose from result. Meisner argued that any serious attempt to understand Chinese history of the late 1960s must begin by appreciating that between “the intentions that motivated the Cultural Revolution and the actual results of the upheaval, there is an enormous gap. What the movement yielded in the end bore little resemblance to the ideals and aims that were proclaimed at the beginning.”³⁴ Similarly, Arif Dirlik wrote that “we have yet to distinguish the intention that underlay the Cultural Revolution from the circumstances that perverted the intention into its caricature.”³⁵ “The language, coherent in the abstract,” as Dirlik reflected on the failure of the Cultural Revolution, “lost its coherence when applied through the realities of power in Chinese society.” “The intention underlying the Cultural Revolution was coherent; not so its practice of revolution.”³⁶

Such a focus on the intentional or doctrinal center of the Cultural Revolution, I argue, warrants justification. Despite the apparent omnipotence (and omnipresence) of Mao and his infinitely mythologized Thought, this stress on the primacy of the doctrine, as well as its coherence, seems to be too hasty and leaves a number of important questions to be answered. For example, is the center of the Cultural Revolution—its original intent or manifest theory—all that matters to our understanding? What about its contradictory effects and the contingent and protracted historical processes in which events unfolded, unforeseen forces were unleashed, and new ruptures emerged? And more important, what about its edges, or that which lies on its margins?

The key question to be raised, therefore, concerns whether our object of study is a unified bloc centering on the agency of the Great Leader, or whether it may be more fruitfully understood as a complex and fluid articulation of heterogeneous movements and currents. The meaning of an act or text is not exhausted by its author’s intention, and the historical world has a recalcitrant being that often resists the calculation and projects of even very powerful leaders. In history, Fernand Braudel once remarked, “the individual is all too often a mere abstraction. In the living

world there are no individuals entirely sealed off by themselves. . . . The question is not to deny the individual on the grounds that he is the prey of contingency, but . . . to react against a history arbitrarily reduced to the role of quintessential heroes.”³⁷ The stake of such a less herocentric approach that focuses on the multiplicity of meanings and projects concerns the very historical object of the Cultural Revolution per se, and the contours of the movement and those fierce battles that shaped its development. We must make the Cultural Revolution thinkable; but what really was this Cultural Revolution that has been so frequently and confidently invoked? Which—and whose—Cultural Revolution was it? In fact, if we reexamine the complex and multilayered history in which its key episodes unfolded, it becomes clear that our very concept of the Cultural Revolution may be deeply problematic. Instead of searching singularly into the center, which is characteristic of “a history of heroes” as Braudel would call it, I believe that to open the history of the Cultural Revolution to critical reinterpretation, we need to look beyond the center and past the edges.

In this book, I will devote my attention to “fussing about particulars,” by examining several key episodes that lay at the unruly margins or peripheries of the Cultural Revolution, in order to illustrate such an interpretive and historiographical detour. The term “margins” here pertains not only to the actors involved—those who were disadvantaged or marginalized in Chinese social and political life—but also to the issues and demands that galvanized political contention, practices that went against the grain, and points of view outside the range of the permissible. Often tentative, heterogeneous, and dispersed, these developments were marginal not in the sense of being trivial or having little political relevance. Although politics at the margins often played no decisive role in determining Red Guard factionalism, it sometimes mobilized tens of thousands of people and occurred in major political centers. Such politics also entails a critical distance from the center of power and a unique vantage point from which the logic of exclusion and inclusion—the constitutive principle of politics—can be made legible. Margins, as Mary Douglas has argued, are inherently dangerous. “If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered.”³⁸ Margins are likewise liminal spaces that are more open to exploration and play of thought, thereby making possible critical reflections on society and politics that, in the words of Victor Turner, “[while] often fantastic, may have sufficient power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the center of a society’s ongoing life.”³⁹ The novel analyses and insights that emerged from the margins, as I will argue in this book, offer a unique prism through

which both the characteristic class relationships of Chinese socialism and the political dynamics of Chinese postsocialism can be understood.

When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, largely as a revolution from above, Mao had little sense of a clear plan and oscillated for weeks or months by improvising decisions to respond to the exigencies of chaotic events. Although numerous Red Guards and rebels responded to Mao's call for rebellion, their relationships with the purportedly omnipotent Great Leader were highly fragile. Called to political activism by Mao, many of the rebels mobilized also in response to their own immediate social, economic, and political circumstances. The characteristic mode of Cultural Revolution mass politics—the direct integration of the highest political authority with the mass movement without the mediation of party-state organizations—not only undercut established authorities but also empowered the discontented and the marginalized.

The Cultural Revolution violently divided China's social and political fabric as the combined result of the precipitous breakdown of state authority and a ubiquitous political ideology that foregrounded hidden enemies, conspiracy, and treason. However, the mass movement that erupted also generated new forms of political subjectivity and solidarity that cut across bureaucratic regimentation and fragmentation. In seeking to release themselves from domination and arbitrary restraints, many rebels tended to focus their attacks on their immediate superiors and various class enemies who allegedly caused their plight. Rarely did they express skepticism about whether power wielded by the newly installed cadres, those who replaced the old power holders toppled by the ferocious mass movement, would be sufficient to bring about transformative changes. With the paralysis of party and state apparatuses, which during normal times produce and enforce authoritative interpretations, Mao's ideas, ambiguous and fragmentary as they were, were interpreted in different ways by different agents. In responding to central policies and calls, rebel activists also adapted and concretized nationally significant issues to suit their own immediate circumstances. Many of the antagonisms that erupted in the Cultural Revolution were local or particular, involving specific groups making differential demands in diverse contexts—for instance, as I will document in this book, the struggles of individuals who suffered political discrimination for equal citizenship, workers' demands for better wages and work conditions, popular grievances against cadre abuses of power, and recalcitrant rebels' opposition to mass demobilization and political recentralization. Each of these conflicts, in its particularity, might seem unrelated to the others. Assimilated into larger political processes and issues, however, these apparently particular

conflicts often cumulatively became generalized and simplified and took on a broader significance that went beyond their original contexts. Giving expression to a myriad of socioeconomic grievances and political antagonisms, the forces unleashed by Mao often took on lives of their own, and some rebels even began to question the existing political order. The disorder caused by mass activism from below and leadership power conflicts at the top created a genuine political crisis that Mao and the members of his inner circle decided must be tactfully neutralized and resolutely resolved.

Politics, according to Jacques Rancière, often emerges from a fundamental dispute or disagreement between the dominant order and an excluded social group. What is central to politics is that the excluded part not only demands to be included but, more important, also claims to metonymically embody the whole of society. In this way, the particular demand to be included causes a rupture because the part cannot be included without disrupting the very logic of the dominant order. Thus, for Rancière, “politics exists whenever the count of parts and parties of society is disturbed by the inscription of a part of those who have no part.”⁴⁰ How and where do we locate and rediscover the eruption of the political moment—ephemeral, illegitimate, and scandalous—in the Cultural Revolution? In the midst of the Cultural Revolution mass movement, as I will later detail, a different political logic and new ideological tendencies began to emerge with the potential to break away from the official ideology. The transformative possibilities of the movement were pressed by a number of young activists and critics who, partly as a result of their position at the margins of the movement, questioned the officially sanctioned discourse and practices of the Cultural Revolution. Through creatively appropriating the dominant political language in their own ways and producing dissenting views that transgressed the official ideology, these critics formulated incipient but intellectually novel analyses of China’s statist-socialist system and its associated forms of social-class inequality that, I will argue, are crucial to a historically grounded understanding of the crisis of Chinese socialism in the late Mao era and the momentous transformations of society and economy in post-Mao China.

The theoretical and political activities of these activists were suppressed ruthlessly, and most of them vanished in the demobilization of mass movement that began as early as 1967. Although these emergent cleavages might not have been central to the prevalent mass-factional conflicts of the Cultural Revolution, and the critiques thus produced were limited by the particular social interests and identities of the activists involved, these moments of ideological innovation and political experimentation help explain how demands originating in specific contexts, when conjoined with larger pro-

cesses and causes, could endow these processes and causes with new meanings. Despite the fact that most actors were constrained by the dominant ideology, the meanings of that ideology—contradictory or ambiguous as they were—were variously interpreted and contested in the highly fluid political processes that characterized the Cultural Revolution. The reproduction of familiar ideas in novel, contingent circumstances, to quote Marshall Sahlins, engenders the “risk of categories in action,”⁴¹ often with destabilizing or even transformative effects. The freeing of political interpretations from the neat categories of official thought created a carnivalesque space in which officially sanctioned ideas and heretical meanings impinged on one another, and orthodox notions, while being ritualistically invoked, were surreptitiously appropriated and creatively modified into new interpretations. This process resembles Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of language play as seen in the work of Rabelais, “as if words had been released from the shackles of sense.” The brief coexistence of words, expressions, and objects outside or on the periphery of the existing system, for Bakhtin, “discloses their inherent ambivalence. Their multiple meanings and the potentialities that would not manifest themselves in normal conditions are revealed.”⁴² In the crowded ideological world of the Cultural Revolution—uniform and monological as it often seemed—there often existed a surprisingly robust heteroglossia in which contests between centripetal forces of political integration and centrifugal tendencies toward multiplication and transgression continued unabated.

Plan of This Book

This book attempts to open up an interpretive space in which a critical, alternative history of the Cultural Revolution can be written. Based on newly available documentary and archival sources, it explores the political dynamics of radicalizing the Cultural Revolution from below through examining several key instances of the expressions of popular socioeconomic and political grievances in their local contexts.

The body of this book is divided into five chapters and an epilogue. Chapter 2 examines the institutional and discursive aspects of class in Mao’s China as a way of contextualizing the subsequent discussions of events during the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was ostensibly all about “class” and “class struggle,” but what did these terms really mean? The chapter begins by situating Mao’s project of the continuous revolution in the historical context of newly emergent social and political antagonisms in post-1949 China, particularly with reference to the bureaucratization of

the party-state. It then proceeds to a discussion of the late Maoist discourse of class, with all its contradictions and incoherence, followed by an account of the institutional codification of class categories in post-1949 China. Artificially perpetuating a field of social antagonisms whose conditions of existence had become profoundly transformed by the 1960s, this state-imposed class system was superimposed on an incipient language of class critical of bureaucratic privilege and inequalities. This entanglement of various forms of class analysis and politics, I will argue, had profound political and ideological consequences for the Cultural Revolution as discourses about old and new class adversaries became hopelessly confused.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5, which comprise the bulk of the book, explore how the political and intellectual initiatives that emerged from the mass movements ventured various ways out of this impasse. Chapter 3 looks at one of the most important debates during the Cultural Revolution. Promoted by children of party officials in the summer of 1966, the so-called bloodline theory argued that China should be run only by those of pure revolutionary family pedigree—which, accordingly, was what authorized the right to rebel. The debate between the bloodline theory and opposing views that protested against political discrimination based on bureaucratic codification of class erupted in late 1966 and early 1967. This chapter will attempt, first, an examination of the family-origin debate in the context of the Red Guards movement in Beijing; and second, a reading of related texts with the aim of revealing the broader political ramifications of this critical discourse.

In Chapter 4, I reconsider the January Revolution in Shanghai in early 1967, a pivotal event often viewed as the radicalizing turning point in the Cultural Revolution. Focusing on the eruption of various forms of social protest in the mass movement, in particular the socioeconomic demands from disaffected segments of Shanghai's laboring population, I argue that the January episode in fact marked a fateful moment in the demobilization of the mass movement. The Shanghai model that emerged in early 1967 constituted, in effect, one of the earliest instances of successful restoration of the local political order.

Chapter 5 investigates the dynamics of mass politics in the province of Hunan. It focuses on the development of the Shengwulian, a loose rebel coalition that mounted a serious challenge to the national trend toward political recentralization. The Shengwulian case illustrated the kind of political development in which a novel language of political and social analysis was fashioned to contest and subvert the dominant ideology, and signaled the significant political and ideological cleavages that were in the making. The suppression of the Shengwulian and similar currents elsewhere was followed

by the demobilization of the mass movement, which effectively marked the end of the freewheeling mass politics of the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 6 begins with an account of the termination of mass politics in 1968–1969. A number of the dissenting and subversive currents that had emerged earlier survived the mass demobilization and suppression and thrived in semiunderground circles during Mao's last years. The partial reactivation of these currents after Mao's death in the popular movements of the late 1970s constituted a critical historical moment of social criticism and political activism. Focusing on the mid- and late 1970s, this chapter situates the inaugural moment of China's liberalizing turn or reform and opening up in the context of the general crisis of the state in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. Through political repression, ideological appropriation, and socioeconomic incorporation, the new reform paradigm that emerged in the early post-Mao years was able to partly absorb popular discontent by joining popular demands to an official vision of socialism centering on marketization, modernization, and economic development.

In the Epilogue, I return to the broader historical and political questions that originally inspired this inquiry in the belief that the radical currents and questioning that I have traced in this book have significance beyond the Cultural Revolution's immediate historical context. Mao's continuous revolution was launched in the 1960s to thwart what he viewed as the imminent degeneration of the revolution and to forestall a slide from socialism to capitalism. However, this is exactly what has happened in its aftermath. How do we understand this profound historical irony? How does a project of rethinking the Cultural Revolution in the context of a rapidly transforming China deepen our understanding of the complex history of revolutions, socialism, and postsocialist transitions in the twentieth century? The Cultural Revolution attacked individual bureaucrats more than the system of bureaucratic domination. Although the movement severely disrupted China's party-state, it left largely intact or even worsened the social and political antagonisms that it attempted to address. The ideological exhaustion of Maoism paved the way for China's ruling elite to reorganize and consolidate its rule by resorting to market-oriented policies as forms of political appeasement and partial readjustment. Beginning with a discussion of recent criticisms of China's postsocialist transition, in the Epilogue I attempt to develop a broad analytic framework that is capable of grounding both a critical-historical inquiry into the Cultural Revolution and a robust critique of China's postsocialist present.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution provides an excellent opportunity to explore a number of important theoretical, historical, and political issues.

The project of rethinking the Cultural Revolution necessitates a historiography that laboriously sifts, sorts, and excavates those facets that have remained less known and even less understood. It is precisely in these facets, as I shall show, that the possibility of writing an alternative, critical history of the Cultural Revolution lies. Although this book pursues a course of inquiry that is predominantly historical, its underlying concerns are firmly grounded in the commitment to engage intellectually and politically with the present. This book addresses the political and epistemic implications of a critical history of the Cultural Revolution and prepares for a historically grounded critique of the Chinese present. In exploring key historical moments of the Cultural Revolution, the larger aim of this inquiry is to investigate the historical conditions of possibility of Chinese postsocialism, and to interrogate the political and ideological meanings of the post-Mao reforms that have profoundly transformed China as it has moved into the twenty-first century.

ENEMIES FROM THE PAST

Bureaucracy, Class, and Mao's Continuous Revolution

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION was an extraordinary political crisis that jolted the political foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The spectacle of widespread, violent rebel assaults on China's party and governmental structures, initiated by the head of that apparatus, was baffling to say the least. A common question among many seasoned observers of Chinese politics was simply "Why?" As Roderick MacFarquhar, the leading scholar of the Cultural Revolution, once wrote:

In the spring of 1966 China seemed a stable, disciplined, and united nation. It was led by a group of men whose comradeship had been forged by the Long March, Japanese aggressions, and civil war. . . . Within months, this image of peace and harmony had been shattered. . . . The Communist party machine was reduced to shambles; its local leaders were paraded through the streets in dunces' hats by youthful Red Guards who drew their inspiration from Mao's electrifying injunction—"To rebel is justified!"

None of the results of the cultural revolution could have been foreseen by Mao with precision. But the dangers of the course on which he was embarking must have been evident to him from the start. Why, then, did he, who had done so much to make the Chinese regime what it was in the spring of 1966, decide to tear down and rebuild?¹

Franz Schurmann, another veteran China scholar, posed the same question: "Why is Mao throwing it all away? After all, six years of careful rebuilding of the economy [after the Great Leap Forward fiasco] and the growing

threat of the Vietnam war had given the Chinese government widespread support from its people within the country and from millions of Chinese abroad.” Schurmann then wondered, in the midst of the turmoil in 1968, “whether China was not committing political suicide for some obscure reason.”²

The obscurity was perhaps more in the eyes of the beholder. Clearly, there was more to the Cultural Revolution than merely a bloody purge or a Byzantine power struggle. Its tragic consequences for numerous ordinary Chinese notwithstanding, the Cultural Revolution was a significant event as an expression—though in painfully distorted fashion—of important problems inherent in its social and historical contexts.

Led by a Communist party with a vast popular base, the revolutionary struggle in twentieth-century China transformed a dilapidated country into a modern state. Suffice it to say that the idea of continuing the revolution emerged when a segment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership realized that taking state power was not the end point of the revolution. Even before the founding of the PRC, Mao was acutely aware of the problems associated with revolutionary transformations after the taking of state power. In a conversation in 1945 between Mao and Huang Yanpei, leader of a left-wing political party who was visiting the Communist base area, Yan’an, Huang asked Mao what would happen if the Red Army succeeded in taking state power, and he expressed concern that the CCP might become degenerate and corrupt, as had previous dynasties founded by peasant rebels. “Dynasties begin with a surge of vigor and then decay and disintegrate,” Huang noted. “Has the Communist Party found a way to break this vicious cycle?” “We have found the new way,” Mao replied confidently. “We can escape this cycle. This new way is democracy. Only under people’s constant watch, and only when everyone takes the responsibility of state affairs into his own hand, will the government not become lax.”³ It is notable that while sympathizers of the revolution were concerned that revolution might be corrupted by power, adversaries of the revolution believed that this would be its inescapable fate. After Madame Chiang Kai-shek heard glowing stories of the Communists’ integrity, idealism, and devotion to their cause from a group of journalists returning from Yan’an, she paused for a few minutes and then said: “If what you tell me about them is true, then I can only say they have never known *real power*.”⁴

Accelerating in the late 1950s, Mao’s partial but significant divergence from the Soviet model of socialism was exemplified by the theory of continuous revolution.⁵ For Mao, the revolution was merely beginning after the conquest of state power. “We began a new Long March in 1949, and

we are still only on the first lap,” a noticeably apprehensive Mao remarked on the eve of the Cultural Revolution to André Malraux, the visiting French minister of culture. Mao continued: “Victory is the mother of all illusions. . . . Humanity left to its own devices does not necessarily re-establish capitalism, but it does re-establish inequality. The forces tending towards the creation of a new class are powerful.”⁶ Mao was convinced that after exploitative class relations based on private ownership were abolished, class conflicts would shift to the terrains of politics, ideology, and culture. The degeneration of socialism therefore would not necessarily occur through the violent overthrow of the socialist state by its former foes, but more likely through the penetration of bourgeois figures and ideas into the revolutionary ranks. The greatest danger would come from a political leadership that turned its back on the socialist road. These new bourgeois elements would set about transforming the class character of state power and eventually create a new exploiting class. This view formed the central doctrinal justification of the Cultural Revolution, which Mao launched in 1966.

This schematic summary leaves a number of crucial points to be clarified. For example, what kind of social and political analysis does such a project entail? How do we situate the theory of continuous revolution in its specific historical context? In seeking to explain the origins of the Cultural Revolution, some scholars have stressed the importance of ideological visions, whereas others have focused on internecine leadership conflicts and, in particular, on how a purportedly sidelined Mao mobilized the Red Guards to reassert undivided power. Although the Cultural Revolution was far from “a coup d’état against the party . . . over which Mao had lost all control” as some have portrayed it,⁷ Mao’s growing sense of alienation from the party and many of his old comrades was clearly a central factor. During the years leading up to the cataclysm, Mao’s concern with political succession was compounded by the perceived betrayal of the revolutionary cause by Nikita Khrushchev after the passing of the founding fathers. It was also exacerbated by his partial withdrawal from routine administrative duties in the wake of the Great Leap Forward as his colleagues cautiously reversed the radical policies that had led to the economic fiasco.⁸ The differences over policy lessons to be drawn from the Great Leap Forward increasingly divided the CCP leadership. Surrounding himself with a coterie of lieutenants who owed their loyalty more to the Supreme Leader than to the party, and whose political interests would benefit from the weakening of other leaders, Mao launched a ferocious attack on many of his comrades and the party organizations allegedly under their control by appealing directly to the masses and calling for rebellion.

It is important to note that these interpretations, which focus on power conflicts, clash of personalities, or broader political and ideological disputes, do not necessarily contradict one another. Although the Cultural Revolution had much to do with Mao's suspicion of (or even paranoia about) those around him and with some of his close associates' ambitions to exploit the turmoil to enhance their own political positions, Mao's motive in targeting both his colleagues and the party also reflected his long-standing concerns with broader problems inherent in post-1949 Chinese society: the decline of revolutionary élan, the mutation of a popular revolutionary movement into a socialist bureaucracy, and, in particular, the possible emergence of a new ruling elite that, as Mao saw it, would lead China toward a class-stratified society. By the mid-1960s, Mao had largely lost faith in the methods of top-down mobilization that had been the hallmark of various CCP campaigns to curb bureaucratic growth. He remarked at the height of the Cultural Revolution in early 1967: "In the past we waged struggles in rural areas, in factories, in the cultural field, and we carried out the socialist education movement. But all this failed to solve the problem because we did not find a form or a method to arouse the masses to expose our dark aspects openly, in an all-round way, and from below."⁹ The Cultural Revolution, as MacFarquhar succinctly noted, "was rooted in both principled and personal disputes."¹⁰ Doctrinal disputes endowed personal rivalry with new meanings, and leadership conflicts sharpened and further amplified policy disagreements of national political import. Its ideological ambiguities and bizarre Byzantine power struggles notwithstanding, the Maoist project of continuous revolution raised vital questions about Chinese socialism and reflected both a genuine desire for change and the intrigues of a small clique. In the reciprocity and exchange between the ideological and the personal, petty conflicts among the leadership cumulatively built into larger clashes among polarized political factions, identities, and programs, and the process culminated in the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s.

The Cultural Revolution was rhetorically all about class and class struggle, which were enduring motifs throughout the Mao era. Many scholars have argued that Mao's project of continuous revolution, that is, the Cultural Revolution, was an active attempt to tackle the problem of the bureaucratic institutionalization of the Chinese Revolution and above all to forestall the rise of a new socialist ruling elite. This problem is of great importance: do socialist bureaucrats constitute a class, and if so, what is to be done? The answer, insofar as late Maoism was concerned, seemed evident. Indeed, was it not Mao himself who argued that a new privileged class was arising at the very heart of the Communist Party? And were not the targets

of the Cultural Revolution defined as the party power holders, who essentially constituted a bureaucratic class? This familiar scholarly interpretation of late Maoism and the Cultural Revolution, I will argue, is flawed in two crucial respects. First, it overlooks the inherent incoherences and ambiguities of the late Maoist ideology of class; and second, it fails to fully comprehend the political and ideological consequences of such ambiguities and fragmentariness as amplified by the specific historical circumstances in which they were pragmatically received and enacted. The point here is that an ideology does not form a static, self-contained system, and the Cultural Revolution did not occur in a social or historical vacuum. Instead, its course was crucially mediated by existing social practices, institutional arrangements, and categories of political understanding.

In this chapter, I examine the discursive and institutional aspects of class in post-1949 China as a way of contextualizing the subsequent discussions. The chapter proceeds on three interrelated fronts. First, I give an account of the emergent social and political antagonisms in Mao's China, particularly with respect to the rise of a bureaucratic state apparatus. Second, I offer a brief discussion of the Maoist ideology of class, with its manifold incoherences and contradictions. Finally, I examine the political and ideological consequences of such ambiguities in their specific historical context through focusing on the institutional codification of class in post-1949 China. Artificially perpetuating a social field of antagonisms that had largely ceased to exist by the 1960s, the discourse of the class-status system was superimposed on an inchoate language of class critical of bureaucratic inequalities, a language that became mostly assimilated into the existing class discourse based on a rigid classification of classes. This entanglement of disparate forms of class analysis and practice had profound consequences for the Cultural Revolution as discourses about old and new class adversaries—each with distinct structures of antagonism and developmental dynamics—became fused or confused. As the rest of this book will show, the political and theoretical initiatives that emerged from the mass movements proposed various ways out of this impasse. The party-state's containment and repression of these subversive currents ultimately resulted in the suppression of innovative class discourses.

When Revolutionaries Became Rulers

The apprehensions of Mao and other CCP leaders about the future of revolution reflect an intractable problem in the history of modern socialism and revolutions. The early socialist thinkers generally had much less to

say about the political organization of the future society than about its economic structure. It was usually expected that after defeating the old elites and taking state power, the working class, led by a vanguard party, would become the new ruling class. Except for a small minority, socialist revolutionaries were reluctant to respond to the challenge posed by the thorny problem of the relation between the class and its vanguard because the abolition of private ownership seemed to have eliminated the classical Marxian criterion for class distinctions. Long before such early twentieth-century socialist thinkers as Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Korsch, Anton Pannekoek, and Paul Mattick became critical of the tendencies of authoritarian socialism in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, Michael Bakunin warned of the dangers of the “official democracy and red bureaucracy” that would prove to be “the most vile and terrible lie our century has created.”¹¹ Instead of seeing the state as deriving from working-class power and as an instrument of revolution, the skeptics believed that the state actually has its own structural logic of domination and self-perpetuation that may be largely independent of existing class interests, and that even under socialism, state forms would generate a whole series of new class antagonisms. Bakunin was perhaps the first to challenge the prevalent Marxist faith in the centralized revolutionary party and strong state as the vehicle for realizing socialist goals. Warning that socialists in power might simply replace the capitalists they had overthrown and thereby leave the position of popular classes they claimed to represent essentially unchanged, Bakunin made a chilling prophecy—over half a century before the birth of Stalinism—of the rise of a new ruling elite in what he condemned as the “pseudo-popular state” characterized by the “government of the vast majority of the people by a privileged minority.”¹²

Although Mao’s ideas were often contradictory or fragmented, he clearly saw the dilemma suggested by earlier socialist thinkers: that party and state power can be an important revolutionary instrument, but it may also hamper revolutionary objectives. In apparent defiance of the deeply pessimistic “iron law of oligarchy” theorized by Robert Michels, the German sociologist and student of Max Weber who argued that any large-scale political organization (in particular, revolutionary parties committed to radical goals) inherently concentrates power in a ruling oligarchy, Mao’s views challenged the prevalent wisdom that as revolutionary movements succeed, they inescapably routinize, deradicalize, and bureaucratize.¹³ Often expressed in abstruse ideological language, Mao’s anxiety over the degeneration of the country’s new ruling elite reflected a deep concern about an enduring problem that had plagued the CCP leadership ever since the founding of the People’s

Republic of China, the metamorphosis of a party-led popular revolutionary movement into an entrenched state and party bureaucracy.

The establishment of the PRC in 1949 marked China's emergence as a unified, modern nation-state. In the euphoric moment of victory, the CCP faced a daunting array of new challenges, such as meeting the basic welfare needs of China's impoverished population, strengthening the country's position in the interstate system through accelerated economic accumulation, and bringing about radical social transformations in accordance with its stated socialist objectives. The prolonged war experiences deeply shaped social and political relations in the PRC. From the start, Chinese Communist rule took a harsh and authoritarian form that involved strengthening the one-party system, increasing political repression, and tightening control of information. A highly repressive garrison state was created in which institutions of the party, the military, and the state were closely intertwined. Because of the CCP's successful seizure of state power by military means, the party was really a rebel army that transformed itself into a state, and military-style bureaucracies and militaristic concepts and practices played prominent roles in the country's everyday social and political life.¹⁴ During the CCP's early years in power, Soviet-style organizations and techniques provided the country's new rulers with ready-made models, albeit with Chinese characteristics. Its radical revolutionary rhetoric notwithstanding, the new regime also embraced many of the practices and institutions that its predecessor had left behind or failed to implement fully.¹⁵ For the CCP, this militarized and disciplinarian model was well suited to the tasks of leading a revolutionary civil war, but it was not particularly conducive to constructing an open, democratic politics after the old regime had been destroyed. Under such circumstances, the challenges of regime consolidation, economic development, and radical social changes rationalized the creation of a highly centralized bureaucracy. Within less than a decade, China's transition to socialism witnessed the metamorphosis of a victorious revolutionary party into a colossal bureaucratic state apparatus. By mobilizing the popular classes into the political process, the Communist-led revolution destroyed the old political and economic elites. However, the same historical process also gave rise to a much larger and more powerful bureaucracy than that of the prerevolutionary regime, one that joined distinct functions of revolutionary transformation, popular empowerment and social leveling, and highly centralized control in a single political formation.

The new party-state was staffed by a gigantic cadre corps. Ezra Vogel has discussed the transformation of party cadres "from revolutionaries to bureaucrats." When the CCP took over the government, the role of cadres

“began to undertake a fundamental change. With the growth and regularization of a stable civilian organization to deal with the more complex tasks of reconstruction and development, cadres gradually left the fields for the offices. . . . Revolutionaries who had been provoking disorder became functionaries preserving order. Publicists who had been criticising authorities took on the responsibility of defending them. . . . The cadre, in short, was well on his way to becoming a bureaucrat.”¹⁶ With the expanded role of the party-state, the size of the cadre corps increased immensely. The Kuomintang (KMT) regime employed 2,000,000 state functionaries in 1948. The new Communist state began with 720,000 in 1949 but quadrupled to 3,310,000 in the first three years. Within less than a decade, from 1949 to 1957, the cadre corps increased tenfold both in absolute number and in percentage of the population—to 8.09 million and from 0.13 to 1.2 percent of the population.¹⁷ This occurred on the eve of the Hundred Flowers movement, when criticisms of bureaucracy and the bureaucrats became the focal point of political contention. The total number of party and state functionaries grew steadily until it reached 11.6 million at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (see Figure 1).¹⁸ The party and state bureaucracy was clearly the top growth sector. In Shanghai, for example, where total employment between 1949 and 1957 grew by only 1.2 percent and the number of factory workers grew by 5.8 percent per year, government staff increased at the much higher annual rate of 16 percent. From another perspective, by 1955, government cadres were eating up nearly 10 percent of the national budget, almost twice the 5 percent ceiling the national leadership had originally planned; and by the Cultural Revolution decade this figure had risen to 30 percent.¹⁹ Arguably the most radical challenge to the bureaucracy in the history of the PRC, the Cultural Revolution led to a reduction of the bureaucracy and decreased the number of cadres to 9.2 million in 1969. This bureaucratic downsizing, however, was short lived. What is intriguing—and ironic—is that the reemergence of the party-state from the onslaught of the Cultural Revolution resulted in the greatest and fastest expansion of Chinese officialdom, which nearly doubled from 9 million in 1969 to 17 million in 1973.

The new socialist state built elaborate hierarchies, its official ideology of equality notwithstanding. The sprawling bureaucracy was organized in accordance with a complex system of ranks and statuses. Although bureaucratic privileges were nothing new in the history of the CCP, during the earlier revolutionary decades their manifestations were far more subdued.²⁰ During the early years of the PRC, there were no formal systems of cadre ranking and statuses except differential job titles, and income distribution was regulated by what had been known as the “free supply system” inher-

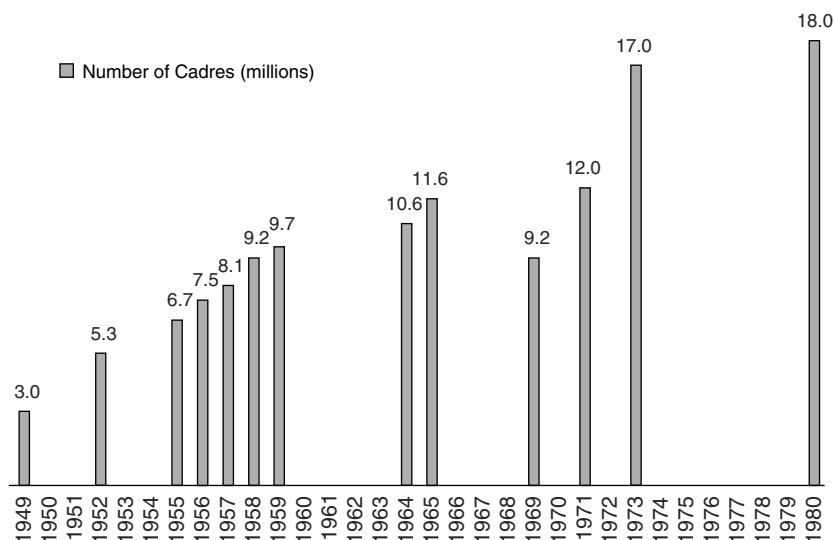


Figure 1. Numbers of cadres, 1949–1980 (in millions). Based on the data from Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 208–209.

ited from the guerrilla-war era, according to which the state provided housing, food, and everyday necessities to party workers.²¹ In the mid-1950s, however, a comprehensive system of cadre ranking came into existence, in which bureaucratically based privileges became formalized and generalized (see Table 1). For all state and party personnel, ranks were assigned from 1 to 30, with salaries varying from 560 yuan for grade 1 (state chairman and vice chairmen) to 18 yuan for the bottom grade of “miscellaneous service staff” (*qinza rennyuan*). Similar to those in state and party administration, cadres in courts and procurates were ranked into twenty-six classes. What was ironic about this system was that the wide income gap among different grades (the salary of the top grade was more than thirty times that of the bottom one) was markedly higher than the wage differential in the KMT system, in which the salary of the top grade was only fifteen times that of the bottom.²²

The new system regulated the distribution of cadres’ special privileges in meticulous detail. The prerogatives of each grade were precisely defined. An individual’s standing in this elaborate hierarchy determined not only his or her salary but also the size of housing; whether one traveled by official car; whether one might be entitled to the services of a chef, domestic servants, or personal nurses; access to special medical facilities; schools one’s children might attend; and access to foreign films and to books with

Table 1 Rank and monthly salary scale of party and government workers, 1955

Rank	Salary (yuan)	Position
1	560	Prime minister,
2	500	vice prime
3	440	ministers, committee heads, and deputy committee heads
4	380	Chairman and vice chairmen
5	340	Governors and deputy governors
6	300	of provinces, mayors and deputy mayors
7	260	Directors and deputy directors, heads and deputy heads of administrative offices
8	230	Department heads and deputy heads, heads and deputy heads of groups of National People's Congress, department heads and deputy
9	200	Secretary general, committee members, directors and deputy directors of committees, ministers and deputy ministers
		Directors and deputy directors of offices
		Directors and deputy directors of the State Council and secretarial department, directors and deputy directors, presidents and deputy presidents, heads and deputy heads of societies in bureaus directly under CCP
		Directors and deputy directors, commanding officers of all ministries and committees

10	heads of all			
11	bureaus, offices,	County heads	Assistant	
12	societies under	and deputy	deputy assistant	Section chiefs
13	the State Council	heads	directors, mayors	of bureaus,
14			and deputy	ministries,
			mayors,	committees
15			administrative	
16		District heads	commissioners	Chiefs and deputy
17		and deputy		chiefs of all
18		district heads	Section members	departments
19				
20				
21				
22				Office
23				workers
24				
25				Miscellaneous
26				service staff
27				
28				
29				
30				

Source: Modified from Yang Kuisong, "Cong gongjizhi dao zhiwu dengji gongzizhi: Xinzhongguo jianguo qianhou dangzheng renyuan shouru fenpei zhidu de yanbian" [From free supply system to rank-differentiated wage hierarchy: Changes in the income distribution system for party and government officials before and after the founding of the PRC], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical research], no. 4 (2007): 128.

restricted circulation. Amenities such as telephones and bathtubs were also dictated in accordance with one's official rank: only department chiefs and agency heads or higher could enjoy a phone and a bathtub at home, while others had to use public telephones and neighborhood bathhouses.²³ An example of this tiered system was a special regulation issued in Shanghai in 1956 that classified cadres' housing prerogatives into a dozen categories, each according to the exact rank of the incumbent. It stipulated that the highest rank, "Grade A of Special Rank" (*te jia ji*), might enjoy "a fine residence of 200 square meters and with a large garden"; the rank "Grade B of Special Rank" (*te yi ji*) might have "a fine residence of 190–195 square meters and with a large garden." Below these highest special ranks, the following all had their own respective entitlements:²⁴

- Rank 1, "a fine residence of 180–185 square meters and with a large garden"
- Rank 2, "a fine private, modern-style apartment of 170–175 square meters"
- Rank 3, "a first-class apartment of 160–165 square meters"
- Rank 4, "an ordinary semiprivate apartment"
- Rank 5, "a modern-style apartment of 120–135 square meters"
- Rank 6, "an ordinary apartment of 100–115 square meters and with bathroom"
- Rank 7, "a traditional-style apartment of 80–95 square meters and with no bathroom"
- Ranks 8 and 9, "simple board-assembled houses"

Despite numerous divisions by official rank, social background, administrative specialty, and political faction, China's party and state elite were bound together in a centralized hierarchical organization set apart from the general populace. The development of bureaucratic authority and privileges was accompanied by the rise of a status-conscious political culture, particularly among school-age children of the new political elite. For example, at Beijing's August 1 School, a school exclusively for children of high-ranking party officials and People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers, "students often compared whose father was higher in rank, and whose father's car was nicer. Many believed that those students whose fathers were higher in official rank should be obeyed."²⁵ A Chinese scholar recalled his childhood experience in the status-sensitive milieu in Beijing: "If you lived in the governmental or military compound, or if you went to a school in which many students were children of cadres, you could sense status hierarchy everywhere. Even when we were very young, we knew exactly the rank of each one's dad, size of the house that a particular rank

could occupy, the kind of car he could use, at which rank a cadre was entitled to ‘special-supply goods,’ and so on. . . . Students from parents of different ranks normally did not mingle and were often divided into different social circles.” During the Cultural Revolution, according to the same scholar, “few people explicitly denounced this hierarchical system. However, many of those ‘revolutionary actions’ against bureaucratism in fact expressed people’s dissatisfactions with bureaucratic statuses and privileges.”²⁶ Ge Yang, a veteran party member and journalist who was purged as a rightist in 1957, observed the irony of the growing social and political enclosure of the new party elite: “At that time, many Communist leaders moved into former royal quarters within the old imperial city. Before, they had lived among the ordinary peasants, and it was often said, ‘Fish cannot live out of water.’ But after the Revolution, if a peasant went into the city to look up a leader, he wouldn’t be able to find him—the water could no longer find the fish! The fish were now inside the Imperial Palace.”²⁷

For most Chinese, the state and its cadredom were a central and ubiquitous presence in everyday life. The party and state bureaucrats as a collective body exercised authority over productive assets, economic processes, and sociopolitical life. In what often has been called China’s “work-unit socialism,” a vast system of work units (*danwei*) populated the country’s social landscape. Labor was effectively owned by the work unit, which provided lifelong employment and extensive socioeconomic welfare—a significant feature of socialism and a historic right won through the Chinese Revolution. As the key pillar of the state’s paternalist labor regime, *danwei* also operated as the institution of discipline and sociopolitical control. Although the permanence of employment often engendered considerable political leverage for the workers vis-à-vis an enterprise’s cadres (because workers could not simply be terminated), the immobility of labor also left them dependent, both politically and socioeconomically, on the work units and their cadres.²⁸ Cadres enjoyed a great deal of latitude in making decisions pertaining to rewards and sanctions, and challenges to them were often viewed as challenges to the party as a whole. Despite the party’s “mass-line” policy, the absence of effective popular oversight produced many familiar pathologies characteristic of China’s state-socialist regime.

The CCP leadership had long been aware of the unwholesome problems associated with the process of socialist state formation. The consolidation and expansion of party and state bureaucracies, as Deng Xiaoping—then the CCP’s general secretary—pointed out in several reports in the mid-1950s, had created numerous problems, such as bureaucratism, authoritarianism, commandism, and conceit and complacency.²⁹ Among the manifold antagonisms newly emerging in socialist China, Mao was particularly concerned

with the bureaucratization of the party and its cadres. Clearly, one of Mao's most important reasons for unleashing attacks on the bureaucracy during the Cultural Revolution was the corruption and abuses of power he felt it produced. The fact that part of China's leadership was acutely concerned with such problems alerts us to the conceptual pitfall of treating the state or the ruling party as a monolithic body. It is suggestive of the contradictory character of the Chinese state—and perhaps the state in general—as an arena wherein social groups and their agents contend with one another, and the very nature and boundaries of what is understood as the political field are in dispute: its practices, agenda, and participants. Thus in the Chinese case, as Richard Kraus noted, “Maoists were also to wage cultural revolution from within the state, as these renegade bureaucrats appealed to non-cadre classes in an effort to depress the evolution of bureaucratic consciousness of their fellow officials.”³⁰

The party's efforts to curb growing bureaucratism and cadre abuses of power continued throughout the Mao era.³¹ One of the pivotal moments occurred in 1957 when Chinese leaders became increasingly impatient with the established system's inability to deal with its own problems. Their concerns did not emerge in isolation but were related to important developments in the international arena. The Soviet de-Stalinization of 1956 raised grave questions about the Soviet-style socialist system that China was emulating; and the uprisings in Eastern Europe made the Chinese leadership apprehensive about the crisis that its regime could face. Mao's concern was clearly reflected in his disapproving remarks about the Stalinist style of government, and he cited Hungary as a lesson: “You forbid people to strike, to petition or to make unfavorable comments, you simply resort to repression in every case, until one day you become a Rakosi.”³² The leadership's anxiety was indicated by the new party constitution adopted in 1956, which called for “maximal effort in every party organization . . . to combat any bureaucratic phenomena that estrange the party from the masses.”³³ In a speech delivered in November 1956, an evidently frustrated Mao made the extraordinary suggestion that drastic measures—ones reminiscent of the “great democracy” (*da minzhu*) or essentially uninhibited mass politics associated with the Cultural Revolution a decade later—might be necessary if the CCP was to “learn a lesson:”

If great democracy is now to be practiced again, I am for it. You are afraid of the masses taking to the streets, I am not, not even if hundreds of thousands should do so. . . . If some people grow tired of life and so become bureaucratic, if, when meeting the masses, they have not a single kind word for them but only take them to task, and if they don't bother to solve any of the problems the masses may have, they are destined to be overthrown. Now this

danger does exist. If you alienate yourself from the masses and fail to solve their problems, the peasants will wield their carrying-poles, the workers will demonstrate in the streets and the students will create disturbances. Whenever such things happen, they must in the first place be taken as good things, and that is how I look at the matter.

. . . Now there are people who seem to think that, as state power has been won, they can sleep soundly without any worry and play the tyrant at will. The masses will oppose such persons, throw stones at them and strike at them with their hoes, which will, I think, serve them right and will please me immensely. Moreover, sometimes to fight is the only way to solve a problem. The Communist Party needs to learn a lesson. Whenever students and workers take to the streets, you comrades should regard it as a good thing. . . . The workers should be allowed to go on strike and the masses to hold demonstrations. Processions and demonstrations are provided for in our Constitution. In the future when the Constitution is revised, I suggest that the freedom to strike be added, so that the workers shall be allowed to go on strike. . . . The masses will have good reason to remove from office whoever practices bureaucracy. . . . I say it is fine to remove such fellows, and they ought to be removed.³⁴

In a speech five months later, Mao reiterated that people “stirring up disturbances” (*nao shi*) should not be feared, and that labor strikes, student boycotts of classes, petitions, and protest rallies should all be considered “good things” useful for the “readjustment of the social order.” Only Ah Q (the idiotic and self-deluding protagonist in Lu Xun’s literary masterpiece *The True Story of Ah Q*), said Mao, would be afraid of popular criticism.³⁵

In his speech “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People,” delivered a few months later, Mao stated that the completion of China’s socialist transformation would not lead to the disappearance of social contradictions. For Mao, contradictions were of two kinds—antagonistic and nonantagonistic. “Contradictions among the people” were nonantagonistic, whereas those between the enemy and the people developed on the basis of fundamentally antagonistic interests. Among the former, Mao placed special emphasis on the contradictions between “government and the people,” or between “leaders and the led,” a crucial assertion that, according to MacFarquhar, appeared “for the first time in Marxist-Leninist theorizing.”³⁶ With a keen sense of the central role and collective identity of bureaucrats, Mao then ominously warned that these contradictions could metamorphose into antagonistic ones—namely, into confrontation between the people and their enemy—unless they were properly handled and resolved.³⁷ These concerns culminated in the Hundred Flowers movement, launched on Mao’s personal initiative. “Only once has a Communist ruler invited his subjects to criticise his regime,” wrote MacFarquhar; “this was in 1957 when Mao Tse-tung, to use his own phrase, called for a hundred flowers to bloom.”³⁸

Contrary to the view held by many leaders that the campaign should be limited to intraparty ideological education and administrative discipline, Mao believed that it would be necessary to mobilize the CCP's populist tradition by "opening up widely" (*fang*) to all those keen on helping the party be more responsive to mass demands.³⁹

The resulting movement in the late spring of 1957 was conducted in the form of heated debates and discussions. The invitation to nonparty critics signaled that the party did not necessarily monopolize correct political ideas and thus might be challenged both from below and from without. The critics exposed a wide range of problems in Chinese society, such as cadre privileges and political inequality, overreliance on the Soviet model, ideological orthodoxy, and growing urban-rural inequality. Not surprisingly, a major focus of criticism was bureaucratic abuses and lack of democracy. Many accused the party of having become dogmatic, authoritarian, and oppressive. Once unleashed, however, some critics went beyond the boundary of political discussions and demanded more than the party (and Mao) was willing to tolerate. In one instance, Liu Binyan, a young journalist and party member, was reported as saying that high-ranking cadres had become a "privileged class" (*tequan jieji*).⁴⁰ In another case, a graduate student named Zhou Dajue, later denounced as an "extreme rightist," wrote an essay titled "On the Development of Classes." Descending from a poor peasant family, Zhou claimed that he had dreamed everyday that there would be a day when he would "enjoy democracy and freedom." "But the experience of the past seven years has proved that it is not so pretty. . . . Following the destruction of the old classes, a new class has emerged, which is different from the old ones, but has characteristics of its own. . . . The party, government, and army people represent a small percentage of the people, but they collectively own the means of production and call it 'common ownership by the people.'" ⁴¹ And Lin Xiling, a twenty-two-year-old female journalism student and former PLA soldier, made a rousing speech at Beijing University in late May 1957, arguing that "genuine socialism should be democratic, but the society we have here is undemocratic. I consider this . . . to be an aberrant form of socialism." "All ruling classes in history," Lin contended, "have one thing in common—their democracy is limited. The democracy of the Communist Party also has its own limits. [The Communists] were bonded with the people during the revolutionary storm. But after the victory of the revolution, they ascended to the ruling position . . . and suppress the people and adopt policies to deceive the people."⁴²

Low-level party workers voiced some of the harshest criticisms. In an essay titled "Two Kinds of Wages," a staff member of the CCP Central Committee named Wang criticized the privileges enjoyed by senior party offi-

cials, pointing out that in addition to wage on paper (*mingyi gongzi*) they also enjoyed various forms of real wage (*shiji gongzi*) or perks, such as private, villa-like residences, domestic servants and private chefs, private cars, and so on. These extrawage forms of remuneration, Wang noted, “add up to two or three times one’s wage.” “Wages are divided into numerous grades, and so are the prerogatives.”⁴³ In another case, a Communist Youth League organizer scathingly criticized the Leninist party’s role in the political life of the country:

[The party] boasts that it is always “great, glorious, and infallible” and places itself above the country and the people, as if “the party equals the country, and the country equals the party.”

During these years, there has been no genuine socialist democracy, not even sham democracy of the capitalist countries. The Constitution is an empty piece of paper only, which the Party can simply disregard.

The party is like the imperial overlord [*taishanghuang*]. It is almighty and sacrosanct, with one hand holding the bible of Marxism-Leninism, and the other wielding the sword of state power. Anyone who has the courage to dissent would be either accused of being “anti-Marxist” or jailed for having committed some fictitious crime.

The election is in reality appointment from above. . . . Who is really in charge of state affairs? According to the Constitution it should be the People’s Congress, but in actual fact the Congress is merely the useless Buddha statue made from mud. The party controls all the power.⁴⁴

The criticism movement of 1957, however, was halted abruptly. Only a few weeks into the movement, Mao and the CCP leadership became alarmed that criticisms might be going too far. On June 8, the *People’s Daily* warned that “a small number of rightists are challenging the leadership position of the Communist Party and the working class.” In an internal directive issued on the same day, Mao declared, “This is a major battle; if we don’t win this, we won’t succeed in building socialism, and there even will be the risk of a ‘Hungarian Incident’ emerging [in China].”⁴⁵ Within days, the short-lived criticism drive was reversed. In the Anti-Rightist Campaign that followed, the infallible and unified leadership of the party was vigorously reasserted, and hundreds of thousands were denounced as “bourgeois rightists.”⁴⁶ Although the campaign initially attacked those who had voiced dissent during the Hundred Flowers period, it soon expanded to target offenses apparently unrelated to “antiparty” and “antisocialist” speeches.⁴⁷

Why did Mao break his solemn pledge not to retaliate? One popular explanation is that Mao was attempting to trap unsuspecting critics so that enemies could be exposed. A less Machiavellian and more convincing explanation is that Mao’s enthusiasm for inviting criticism from below was not

shared by other party leaders, and that when the full extent of popular dissatisfactions became known, Mao was pressured to “disavow his original intention and to concur in the anti-rightist campaign.”⁴⁸ The repression that ended the movement, so to speak, might not have been preplanned but rather might have been a hastily improvised emergent measure to cut short an unforeseen development. Mao’s role in this episode was certainly contradictory. Facing growing popular criticisms, Mao vacillated and eventually quashed the very movement he had called into being. The 1957 episode witnessed the beginning of Mao’s attempt to mobilize nonparty forces in a movement significantly free of bureaucratic control, an attempt that, in the words of Lowell Dittmer, “was thwarted but never given up.”⁴⁹ A similar development was to be repeated during the Cultural Revolution a decade later, when the antibureaucratic themes of 1956–1957 would explode into a cataclysmic mass movement, again initiated by Mao.

Socialist Bureaucracy and Ruling-Class Formation

Among the multitude of issues at stake in the Cultural Revolution, none had more momentous implications than the problems of class and class analysis. A number of China scholars have argued that a specifically Chinese version of an antibureaucratic or what may be called a “new-class” critique of socialism was developed in late Maoism and practiced during the Cultural Revolution. Richard Kraus, for instance, has pointed out that from the late 1950s Mao increasingly traced the roots of social conflict to the new socialist state: “In this view, socialist classes were based ultimately upon power relationships in a highly bureaucratized society.”⁵⁰ Indeed, Mao appears to be one of the few political minds who had developed a class analysis of socialist bureaucracy. The Cultural Revolution may be seen as a bold experiment to forestall the bureaucratization that had plagued socialist revolutions, and Mao’s view has been compared to that of Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav critic best known for his critique of the Communist elite as a new ruling class, or that of Leon Trotsky, who criticized the Stalinist elite as a bureaucratic stratum.⁵¹ Although criticism of the degeneration of the revolutionary party is by no means a new theme in Marxist theory, Mao, as Kraus put it, “was perhaps the first communist leader in power” to be deeply concerned with such issues. “Trotsky and Djilas . . . developed their critiques only after they had been removed from power.”⁵² Maurice Meisner argued very energetically for this view and deserves to be quoted at length:

The ideology of the Cultural Revolution set forth the thesis that China's post-revolutionary order had created a new bureaucratic ruling class, a functional "bourgeoisie" that was exploiting the masses of workers and peasants by virtue of its political power. . . . [Mao] warned that the new socialist society was producing "new bourgeois elements" and a new bureaucratic class. He attributed the origins of this new "bourgeoisie" to the inequalities generated by Communist China's political system, a Stalinist hierarchy of bureaucratic ranks and status.

In conceiving the Cultural Revolution, Mao had arrived at a conclusion that no other Communist in power had been willing to entertain. . . . Mao came to believe that a socialist society, if left to its own devices, would generate a new exploiting class. The new ruling class would be fashioned not from the remnants of the old bourgeoisie that had been destroyed by the revolution but rather from the bureaucrats of the Communist present. . . . Mao sometimes bluntly referred to them as "the bureaucratic class," whose members, he charged, were becoming "bourgeois elements sucking the blood of the workers."⁵³

For Meisner, what is crucial is not Mao's view that socialism could produce a new ruling class, which was neither unique nor theoretically developed, but rather the fact that it was produced by the leader of a Communist state who put his ideas into concrete practice. "It had not happened before," wrote Meisner, "and it is not likely to happen again."⁵⁴

China scholars with diverse political views have highlighted the populist and antibureaucratic thrust of late Maoism. John King Fairbank, for example, wondered why Mao in launching the Cultural Revolution "should practically destroy the party he had built up and so endanger the whole revolution." Mao, he wrote, "became concerned about the seemingly inevitable buildup of the institutions of the central government and its many levels of officials and cadres. . . . Given the modern necessity for expert management, and the irrepressible tendency toward personal privilege and corruption among China's new ruling class, it would be hard to prove him wrong."⁵⁵ Similarly, Hong Yung Lee argued that the Cultural Revolution concerned "how to deal with the bureaucratization of the Party" and "how to cope with the widening gap between the elite and the masses in a socialist China."⁵⁶ For Harry Harding, the Cultural Revolution was "the most radical period in the history of the People's Republic . . . [and] involved proposals for the destruction of bureaucracy and its replacement with loosely structured, highly participatory administrative organizations patterned after the Paris Commune."⁵⁷ According to Stuart Schram, in launching the Cultural Revolution, Mao was bent on "nothing less than smashing the entire party organization as it now exists, and building it up again from the bottom." Mao's aim was "to create a party organization of

a new type, with built-in safeguards against ‘bureaucracy.’”⁵⁸ Similarly, Roderick MacFarquhar contended that the Polish and Hungarian uprisings of 1956 convinced Mao that “the underlying issue was the relationship of party and people.”⁵⁹ Once Mao realized that the Communist Party in power was a fundamental cause of bureaucratic degeneration, MacFarquhar noted, he would be led to the perfectly logical but explosive conclusion that the very political system in which the party held its power must be radically transformed. “In 1957 Mao did not go as far as that,” MacFarquhar wrote, “but nine years later Mao was to strike at the position of the party in power.”⁶⁰

This prevalent view that an antibureaucratic or new-class critique of socialism formed the distinctive hallmark of late Maoism, I argue, at least needs to be qualified by several caveats. First, schematically, Mao’s notion of the “new bourgeoisie” (*xinsheng zichan jieji*) was fraught with ambiguities and incoherence. Graham Young, for example, has suggested that the doctrine of continuous revolution and its underlying theory of class formation in fact contained several interconnected but markedly different interpretations. They ranged from analyses that stressed the remnant influence of prerevolutionary elites to views that highlighted newly emerging socioeconomic inequalities in the socialist society and finally to a focus on the possible emergence of a new bureaucratic class.⁶¹ Each of these interpretations differed significantly in its understanding of the class dynamics of Chinese socialism, the loci of class antagonisms, and the goals of the continuous revolution. Enacted during the Cultural Revolution, such recurrent categorical ambiguities would be subject to improvisational play by way of reinterpretation and recombination. Young therefore cautioned against the tendency to read a single, unified meaning into the Maoist ideology of class, arguing that it would be necessary to resist the temptation to aggregate different interpretive strands “into a more coherent whole.”⁶²

Second, its attention to bureaucratized political power notwithstanding, the Maoist theory of class focused largely on the distributional correlates or manifestations of power—such as bureaucratic privileges and the wage-grade system—rather than on the political structure and institutions that gave rise to such power. Martin Whyte has made this point clear: “The distinctiveness of Chinese egalitarianism is to be found not so much in its reduction or elimination of differences in income, power and educational skills, although some of this has occurred, but in its attempt to mute the consequences, in terms of matters like life styles, consumption patterns and interpersonal deference, of the inequalities that do exist.”⁶³ For example, one of Mao’s persistent preoccupations in his last years, the critique of “bourgeois right,” stressed the necessity of actively reducing all manifestations of socio-

economic inequality resulting from differentials in income and status in socialist society.⁶⁴

Third, the notion of “new bourgeois elements” mostly referred to ideologically deviant individuals or factions within the Chinese Communist Party. After the late 1950s, Mao increasingly turned to political attitude or conduct as a criterion for defining social class. The key concept here was the inherently vague and unstable notion of the “line” or “road” (*luxian*), which referred to the leadership’s ideological orientation. Despite his bleak view that Thermidorian or counterrevolutionary forces exist in the revolutionary ranks, Mao in fact had a rather sanguine estimate regarding the political efficacy of such deviant tendencies. Except for a minority of die-hard “capitalist roaders,” the majority of cadres, according to this view, could be ideologically rehabilitated. In the Sixteen Points, issued by the CCP Central Committee in August 1966 arguably as the program of the Cultural Revolution, important distinctions were made among four types of cadres: (1) good, (2) relatively good, (3) those who had made serious mistakes, and (4) a small number of antiparty rightists. “In ordinary situations,” it states, “the first two categories (good and relatively good) are the great majority.”⁶⁵

Fourth, the Maoist notion of the “new bourgeois elements” was considerably broader and more heterogeneous than what has commonly been understood by those who interpret late Maoism as a form of new-class theory. In addition to the “privileged stratum” (cadres and their offspring who inherited the privileges), this category also included a motley collection of other politically suspicious elements, such as “speculators,” “embezzlers,” “bourgeois academic authorities,” “vested interest groups,” and various “black categories,” that is, the remnants of the prerevolutionary elites. The Cultural Revolution began in 1966 with Mao mobilizing the populace to attack the “bourgeois intellectuals” and the so-called “freaks and demons.” The movement quickly expanded to target the “capitalist roaders” or “new bourgeois elements” in the Communist Party, who were understood as intimately linked—either directly or through ideological ties—with the remnants of the old elites overthrown by the Communist Revolution.⁶⁶ Mao stressed the political and ideological influences of the remnants of the old elites when he raised the issue of class struggle for the first time in 1962: “Our revolution is perhaps the most thorough and complete. Yet in some places a significant number of bad people or counterrevolutionary elements have wormed into [*hunru*] the government or leadership. . . . Among our party members there are many petit bourgeoisie, some rich peasants and their descendants, some intellectuals, and some bad people—they have not yet been remolded and are not at all Communists. These

people are Communist Party members only in appearance; but they are actually Guomindang.”⁶⁷ In this view, the new and old class enemies became interchangeable, and the deviant political tendencies were viewed as originating from without—from the prerevolutionary elites who “wormed into” the Communist Party. The nomination of the “capitalist roaders in the party” as the principal target of the Cultural Revolution reflected precisely this logic and would have a fateful impact on the dynamics of the Cultural Revolution.

Last, although Mao often warned that cadres might become a new privileged stratum, he in fact had never portrayed this group as an emerging ruling class. Mao was careful to define the targets of the Cultural Revolution as elements in the party that had taken the capitalist road. In one oft-cited passage in support of a new-class interpretation of late Maoism, Mao is quoted as remarking in 1965, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, “The bureaucratic class [*guanliao zhuyizhe jieji*] is sharply opposed to the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants. These people have become or are becoming bourgeois elements sucking the blood of the workers.”⁶⁸ These words, however, need to be interpreted with caution. Rather than referring to the bureaucrats as forming a class, Mao meant instead those cadres who were ideologically vulnerable and infected with bureaucratic style. Mao’s stress that the rest might be politically reliable demonstrates that the focus here is only a segment of the bureaucracy. Over a year later, in 1966, this point was accentuated in the Sixteen Points, which included the “revolutionary cadres” among the “main force of the Cultural Revolution.”⁶⁹ Clearly, what was central for late Maoist theory was not the radical negation of bureaucracy, but rather fashioning a ruling apparatus more responsive to mass input from below.

Class as Classification

In the previous section, I argued that although late Maoism contained within itself a significant dose of what may be considered a new-class critique, its criticism of the socialist bureaucracy was fraught with ambiguities. Here I will further suggest that the political and ideological effects of these fragmentary ideas, insofar as the Cultural Revolution was concerned, must be understood in terms of the concrete historical circumstances in which they were pragmatically enacted and received. Ideology does not form a self-contained system, and to go beyond an undue emphasis on the Maoist ideology as disembodied texts, we must examine the wider social space of institutions and communication that complicate the seeming liter-

ality of meanings. The Cultural Revolution did not play out in a historical vacuum simply according to the Great Leader's master plan. Instead, its events were crucially mediated by existing social practices, institutional arrangements, and categories of political understanding.

Late Maoism's emphasis on the "new bourgeoisie" must be situated in the crucial historical context of a massive institutional and discursive apparatus that classified, monitored, and acted on the class status of every Chinese. The story of China's ubiquitous class-status (*chengfen*) system is a familiar one. Throughout the Mao era, all Chinese families were assigned a label based on the class status of the male family head, which corresponded with where he stood in the party's taxonomy of class. This practice of class classification originated as a useful instrument of organizing peasant revolution. During the land reform, class status referred to the position of each household on a socioeconomic scale that included landless laborers, poor and middle peasants, rich peasants, and landlords. Before landed assets were redistributed, party workers were sent out to inquire about the occupations, property holdings, and family backgrounds of the villagers. As part of the investigation that preceded land redistribution, each family was assigned a class designation or label. Finally came the class-struggle movement, in which the poor peasants were encouraged to settle accounts with landlords who had imposed excessive rent payments, charged usurious interest rates, and abused tenants and farm laborers. Confiscation of the property of landlords and rich peasants shattered the prerevolutionary agrarian hierarchy, and through class identification and labeling, the former landed elites were reduced to social pariahs.⁷⁰

After the Communist victory in 1949, the practice of class labeling, once a part of the concrete process of mobilizing popular struggles, became generalized into a rigid bureaucratic system of political control through naming and classifying social identities. During the early years of the PRC, an elaborate system of over forty class categories was developed and applied to the entire Chinese populace. These categories ranged from stigmatized ones, such as capitalists and landlords, to workers and peasants, in whose name the revolution was carried out (see Table 2).

As the Communist Revolution was largely based in the countryside, rural class labeling was far more elaborate.⁷¹ It was commonly understood, according to a speech Liu Shaoqi delivered in 1950, that landlords or rich peasants made up as much as 10 percent of the rural population.⁷² In comparison, the determination of urban class identities was less systematic and combined both official investigation and self-reporting about autobiographical history. By the mid-1950s, urban residents in most walks of life had been classified as worker, urban poor, or capitalist, among other categories.

Table 2 The system of class labels

Main class designations	Subdesignations	
Noneconomic	Military officer for an illegitimate authority	
	Counterrevolutionary	
	KMT special agent	
	Bad element	
	Rightist	
	Capitalist roader	
	Dependent of revolutionary martyr	
	Revolutionary soldier	
	Revolutionary cadre	
	Urban	Capitalist
		<i>Comprador capitalist</i>
		<i>Commercial capitalist</i>
		<i>Industrial capitalist</i>
Petty bourgeois		
<i>Liberal professional</i>		
<i>Office staff</i>		
<i>Small factory owner</i>		
<i>Small shopowner</i>		
<i>Peddler</i>		
<i>Urban pauper</i>		
Idler		
Worker		
<i>Pedicab worker</i>		
<i>Sailor</i>		
<i>Handicraft worker</i>		
<i>Transport worker</i>		
<i>Enterprise worker</i>		
Rural	Landlord	
	<i>Despotic landlord</i>	
	<i>Bankrupt landlord</i>	
	<i>Sublandlord</i>	
	<i>Hidden landlord</i>	
	<i>Managerial landlord</i>	
	<i>Landlord who is an industrialist or merchant</i>	
	<i>Overseas Chinese landlord</i>	
	<i>Enlightened landlord</i>	
	Small land lessor	
	Rich peasant	
	Middle peasant	
	<i>Well-to-do middle peasant</i>	
<i>New middle peasant</i>		
<i>Old middle peasant</i>		
Poor peasant		
Hired agricultural laborer		

Source: Modified from Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), appendix, 185–187.

Segments of urban society suspended between proletarian and bourgeois categories included petty shop owners and street peddlers, as well as the amorphous category of white-collar workers (“staff” or *zhiyuan*). In addition to categories based on one’s socioeconomic position, other categories were defined through explicitly political criteria—one’s relationship to the party and the state, a clear anomaly in strict Marxist terms. The proletarian categories, for instance, included “revolutionary cadre,” “revolutionary soldier,” and “family member of revolutionary martyr.” On the opposite side of the political spectrum, categories such as “counterrevolutionary,” “bad element,” and “family member of counterrevolutionary” were applied to individuals deemed unworthy of socialist citizenship. The term “counterrevolutionary,” for example, was never precisely defined and was used for either alleged opposition to the party or past association with the KMT regime, while the omnibus category “bad elements” referred to those who had committed petty crimes, such as theft or sex-related offenses. Although the basic categories had been defined for the most part by the mid-1950s, new ones were added whenever necessary and as dictated by political circumstances during the incessant political campaigns characteristic of the Mao era.⁷³

The immediate political purpose of the class-status system was to determine the social basis of the revolution and the enemies of the new state. Membership in “the people” was reserved for the proletarian categories, whereas those labeled bourgeois were noncitizens (or less than citizens).⁷⁴ Stripped of political (and often socioeconomic) rights, individuals in undesirable categories were placed under the watchful eyes of the police, the militia, cadres, and ordinary citizens, whereby the watchful eye of the state was turned into the gaze of the many. The new state became established through the imposition of new boundaries and categories of configuration on previously uncategorized peoples and spaces. The enumeration of class-based identities made society—as James Scott has put it—“readable” to the state by way of reducing an extraordinarily complex and unwieldy “social hieroglyph” to a “legible and administratively more convenient format,” thereby facilitating state intervention in an opaque or even inaccessible terrain.⁷⁵ By dividing China’s population into distinct status groups, the class-status system served important functions, such as population policing and control, as well as redistribution and social leveling, or, as Gordon White has suggested, served as a form of “revolutionary egalitarianism.”⁷⁶ Although the system was imposed through the agency of state power, it enjoyed considerable support during the early years of the PRC among rank-and-file party activists and significant segments of the populace, when memories of the violent civil-war decades were still fresh and popular desires for revolutionary vengeance remained strong.

The new system of organized inequality initially was not expected to play a long-lasting role in the political life of the new nation. The Chinese population in the mid-twentieth century was in constant flux as decades of war and revolutionary turmoil profoundly altered the social landscape. Although the system corresponded to ideas of popular justice that the time had come for the formerly subordinated to reverse the relationships of inequality, it was viewed as only a temporary measure that would soon fade away. According to policies issued in the early 1950s, expropriated landlords could change their class labels in five years if they took part in physical labor and obeyed the law, and rich peasants could be reclassified after three years.⁷⁷ The essentially declassing impact of revolutionary upheaval was not lost on the CCP leaders. In a speech delivered in 1956, Deng Xiaoping spoke of the fluidity of China's new social relationships and admitted that the classification of classes "has lost or is losing its original significance":

In recent years . . . the situation has fundamentally changed. The difference between workers and office employees [*zhiyuan*] is now only a matter of division of labor within the same class. Coolies and farm labourers have disappeared. Poor and middle peasants have all become members of agricultural producers' co-operatives, and before long the distinction between them will become merely a matter of historical interest. . . . The vast majority of intellectuals have now come over politically to the side of the working class, and a rapid change is taking place in their family background. The conditions under which the urban poor and professional people existed as independent social strata have virtually been eliminated. Every year large numbers of peasants and students become workers, large numbers of workers, peasants and their sons and daughters join the ranks of intellectuals and office workers, large numbers of peasants, students, workers and office workers join the army and become revolutionary soldiers, while large numbers of revolutionary soldiers return to civilian life as peasants, students, workers or office workers. What is the point then of classifying these strata into two different categories? Even if we were to try to devise a classification, how could we make it clear and unambiguous?⁷⁸

The leadership consensus about the diminishing importance of class classification was expressed by none other than Mao himself, who, in arguing that "class contradictions within our country have already been *basically* resolved,"⁷⁹ offered the similar view that new types of social contradictions were supplanting old ones, and that the old political language and analysis had to be adapted to new circumstances.

But during the Mao era, the attenuation of the system of fixed class identities did not take place as once envisaged; instead, the system increasingly hardened. The complex historical circumstances in which the rhetoric and practice of class warfare intensified remain to be more fully under-

stood. Evidently, the party's continuous anxiety about its former enemies was a major factor, and its concerns were exacerbated by both the domestic socioeconomic crisis in the wake of the Great Leap Forward and growing Cold War antagonisms. Notably, the system and practice of class labeling proved useful for disciplining social and political deviancies that proliferated in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁸⁰ The heightening of class-war rhetoric and the consolidation of the system of class classification occurred at the same time as the construction of China's ubiquitous *hukou* (household registration) system, the much-detested internal passport system that tied every citizen to a particular location.⁸¹ Together, these formed part and parcel of a more general process in the emergence of a disciplinary regime of population administration, political mobilization, and socioeconomic management, and class, among other critical indexes, became a strategic site of societal policing and reordering.

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing until the end of the Mao era, the codification of class was integrated into a wide-ranging network of party control, social mobilization, and political campaign. With the aim of promoting the status of historically underprivileged classes while restricting the opportunities of prerevolutionary elites, an elaborate set of "class-line" (*jieji luxian*) policies was implemented. Many Chinese institutions practiced some degree of class discrimination, giving preference to individuals of proletarian statuses and origins and disadvantaging people of politically undesirable categories. Schools, for example, had class-based admission procedures, as did the party and youth organizations. The judicial system often operated according to the principles of class justice, treating bourgeois defendants more harshly than their proletarian counterparts.⁸² Frequently as a result of local initiatives as well as central instructions, the practice of categorizing individuals and its associated discriminatory policies had a direct impact on one's position in the society and on one's offspring's opportunities for social and political advancement.

A good example was the area of higher education in which class-based discriminatory policies were justified in the name of egalitarian social leveling. Beginning in the 1950s, college admission was based on a combination of academic and political criteria, the latter including both political behavior and class origin. In post-1949 China, academic fields were classified into three categories: open or nonrestricted (*yiban*), restricted or secret (*jimi*), and highly restricted or top secret (*juemi*). On the basis of political conduct, class origin, and social/familial networks (*shehui guanxi*), an applicant's political reliability was evaluated on a three-point scale: (1) eligible for restricted fields of study, (2) eligible for nonsensitive fields, or (3) unsuitable for admission. In 1964, according to official statistics, 19.06

percent of all college applicants in Shanghai were eligible for top-secret fields, 24.66 percent for secret fields, and 45.93 percent for nonrestricted fields, and 10.35 percent were deemed inadmissible.⁸³ Specifying the criteria of a political background check (*zhengzhi shencha*), a guideline issued in 1958 by the Ministry of Education named a dozen categories of students as inadmissible to any field of study, including the following:

- Those with “complicated political history” that had not yet been fully investigated or cleared
- Those with direct family members who either had been executed or had committed suicide for fear of punishment
- Those with direct family members who had been sentenced to jail or labor reform or were engaging in counterrevolutionary activities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, or capitalist countries
- Those with direct family members who were counterrevolutionaries or antiparty, antisocialist elements
- Those who had close family relatives and friends (*qinmi shehui guanxi*) who had been either executed or jailed or were engaging in counterrevolutionary activities in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, or capitalist countries
- Those from exploiting-class family backgrounds, such as landlords, rich peasants, and reactionary KMT officials⁸⁴

Class-based restrictions were progressively tightened. In the 1950s, belonging to the category of capitalists was not considered a disqualifying factor, but the policy adopted in 1962 barred students from both capitalist and rightist families from being admitted to restricted fields. In 1963, political requirements were raised, and fields such as foreign languages, law, statistics, international trade, nuclear physics, and geophysics were classified as secret or top secret, meaning that students from insufficiently proletarian, revolutionary, or “red” families would not be eligible. In the mid-1960s, admission standards were again tightened. This time, even those whose grandparents had been sentenced to punishments were subject to restrictions.⁸⁵ As a result of such class-based admission policies, the proportion of college students from undesirable class backgrounds decreased, and those from politically desirable or “good” class backgrounds significantly increased, reaching over 70 percent of the total college enrollment in 1965.⁸⁶

Chinese society during the Mao era had numerous social aliens. The city of Wuhan in central China is a good example. As a “peacefully liberated” (*heping jiefang*) city, where the local KMT forces surrendered during the Communist takeover, Wuhan had a sizable population of politically prob-

lematic individuals. It was estimated that 22,000 KMT officers and soldiers, 32,000 militiamen, 6,200 policemen, and 10,000 civilian functionaries remained in the city. During the so-called democratic reform of industrial enterprises (1951–1954), about 8,000 to 10,000 were labeled “reactionary feudal elements.” In addition, there were 40,000 “capitalists.” During the early 1950s, several thousand people were convicted as counterrevolutionaries. The Loyalty and Honesty Campaign (1951) found that 2,464 cadres had politically problematic histories. The Elimination of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign (1955–1956) again identified 6,652 people as counterrevolutionaries and “bad elements.” The Anti-Rightist Campaign labeled 6,261 individuals “rightists” and 945 “bad elements.” Meanwhile, 1,928 individuals were internally classified (*nei ding*) as “medium rightists” (*zhong you*), which meant that their labels were recorded in the dossier but not made public.⁸⁷

Although Mao repeatedly stated that class enemies made up about 5 percent of the total Chinese population,⁸⁸ the actual proportion targeted or implicated was much higher because if one person was so labeled, then not only that person’s immediate family but also other relatives could become stigmatized. It is worth noting that although the whole household was considered bad class when it was headed by a bad class element, young people from such homes were not always considered enemies, and many might enjoy some political rights. Here some additional clarifications are in order. In the Mao era, there were two basic class-related indicators, which in theory should be distinguished from each other: class origin (*jiating chushen*) in terms of one’s family class background and class status (*geren chengfen*) in terms of current social (and occupational) position. This distinction pertains especially to the underage offspring of undesirable elements, who were not supposed to be assigned a class status.⁸⁹ This, however, does not mean that class identification was not relevant in such cases. Although one’s class status was recorded separately for each adult aged eighteen years or older, class origin or class background as derived from the class status of the male family head was applicable to all household members, regardless of age and gender. Despite the fact that these two indicators were supposed to be kept separate according to the party’s policy book, there were no clear guidelines about the relative importance of the two criteria. Confusion over these terms found recurring expression in Chinese political life in the Mao era, and Red Guard polemics during the Cultural Revolution focused a great deal on the ambiguities of the two.

In the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution, class status and class origin gradually became conflated, and what may be called a genealogical

understanding of class became predominant. As I will detail in Chapter 3, class as defined by the family's "bloodline" (*xuetong*) was inherited patrilineally like a surname and often turned the children of social outcasts into pariahs. The stigma of an undesirable class label was virtually impossible to cast off either by statements of loyalty or repudiation of one's parents (or even grandparents). Often considered branded because of their parents' class status, children of class aliens might find it hard to obtain higher education, to join the party, to land desirable jobs, or even to get employment. They often had difficulty in finding mates. Those with favorable class status tended to marry within their own rank, whereas those at the opposite end of the social circle were compelled to intermarry because of their pariah status.⁹⁰ Young people of undesirable class origins often worked hard in order to alleviate the damaging effects of their birthmarks, but their efforts were often suspected of being opportunistic. Although the official rhetoric held that offspring of politically undesirable or "bad" class elements should be treated as capable of political rehabilitation, the state implicitly (or explicitly) endorsed the view that political positions were more likely to be determined by family background and upbringing. "Actually you should be more on guard against the landlord's son," remarked a village cadre, "the old landlord himself is already just a useless old stick."⁹¹

How the Old Bottle Spoiled New Wine

The enormous political importance attached to class labeling notwithstanding, class turned out to be a highly ambiguous category. People's socioeconomic positions often change as a result of revolutionary upheaval. Large segments of society were neither unmistakably proletarian nor bourgeois, but they nevertheless had to be given exact class locations. Because class identities were often unclear, many invented their identities by creatively interpreting biographical data. Individuals might be associated with two or more identities depending on which segment of life history was foregrounded. As a result, state policies of class identification gave rise to widespread practices of selective presentation or even evasion. The proliferation of class categories necessary to capture the entire population also led to all sorts of difficult cases, such as offspring of landlords who had joined the Red Army, or sons of a revolutionary martyr accused of being rightists. In these cases, the local cadres' decision often was crucial. Because determination of class identities tended to be haphazard and informal, the outcomes left much room for contestation, particularly during the Cultural Revolution.

Indeed, class took on a role in Mao's China that no Marxist founding fathers could have imagined. Until the class-status or *chengfen* system was abolished in the late 1970s, the reified category of class essentially defined one's relationship to the state and significantly determined the life chances of numerous individuals. Class identity was recorded in the ubiquitous *hukou* registers and dossier files stored in personnel departments and police stations. These files included the basic coordinates of personal identity, such as age, gender, birthplace, class origin, social status, and nationality, as well as any personal confessions or political charges produced by informants. The immense importance attached to these bureaucratically constructed identities was evidenced by the massive system of producing and maintaining documents that contained citizens' biographical histories. Data were painstakingly assembled and analyzed, and reinvestigation to catch "fish that escaped the net" (*louwang zhiyu*) could occur years or even decades later.⁹² In such makeup campaigns, punishments were often meted out to those who had misrepresented undesirable class origins or political history.

In Mao's China, it was considered revolutionary justice to treat classes as stratified layers in a hierarchical structure and to classify individuals in accordance with fixed criteria, such as family origins. The partition of society into class-specific specimens frozen in time was made possible by a Manichean language that divided the world into the good and the evil and by an elaborate symbolic system of binary oppositions (red/black, new/old, revealed/concealed, pure/polluted, and so on) that metaphorically reproduced the two worlds belonging to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, respectively.⁹³ The political import of such a fossilized system cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, it was really through this system of class reification and essentialization—with all its symbolic trappings—that the concept of class acquired special concreteness. Reinforced by the vast array of institutional and ritual-symbolic forms of class struggle, the classification of class provided the palpable discursive and material basis for the cognitive consensus both within the party and among the Chinese populace regarding the political meaning of class. Within this scheme, remnants of the old elites were reduced to pathetic and totally powerless figures. But this did not really matter; what mattered was that their repeated scapegoating, however artificially staged, gave real, recognizable human faces to an abstract discourse based more on imagination than on political reality.

In qualifying his stress on the importance of the notion of the new class in late Maoism, which took on explosive political significance during the Cultural Revolution, Stuart Schram—the doyen of Western scholarship on Mao and Maoism—once argued: "Whatever our conclusion regarding

the nature of the ‘new class’ and its place in Mao’s scheme of things, the ‘class status’ of the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the Chinese People’s Republic would necessarily continue to be determined by their family origins. . . . Beyond any doubt, Mao was fully responsible for the use of inherited class status, or *chengfen*, as the basis for something not far short of a caste system, governing the lives and prospects of all Chinese citizens.”⁹⁴ Schram was correct on this, but he did not go far enough. What is important here, I suggest, is not merely that the two different views of class—based on old and new criteria, respectively—ran parallel to each other, but rather how they coalesced within a common political framework.

The key point here is that the Maoist critique of the socialist bureaucracy or the new class took on political meaning from the imaginary universe of the old class—the bureaucratically codified class enemies defined mainly in terms of prerevolutionary social positions. In this congested symbolic space, all social aliens, real or imagined, were lumped together into the single category of class enemies, ultimately standing for all that was evil in prerevolutionary Chinese society. China’s traditional folkloric demonological paradigms contributed considerably to the cultural idioms of political discourse in Mao’s China. For example, “cow monsters and snake demons” (*niugui sheshen*) became the recurrent metaphor to represent those identified as class enemies.⁹⁵ Invoking the traditional religious language of demonic invasion and the image of an ominous underworld populated by malevolent spirits, discourses about old and new class adversaries—each with distinct historical trajectories and structures of antagonism—became fused or confused. In this marvelous world in which distinct discourses of class became interchangeable, the chain of class aliens could expand endlessly by simple extension and incorporation as dictated by shifting political exigencies, with each newly added element partaking of the same symbolic essence that reflected the imagined evils of the ancien régime. For example, from the “black four categories” (*hei si lei*) that lumped together counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, landlords, and rich peasants, it was only a small step to the “black five categories” (*hei wu lei*) by adding the newly invented category of rightists. The “black seven categories” (*hei qi lei*) added the former bourgeoisie and the capitalist roaders. During the Cultural Revolution, “traitors,” “agents,” and “bourgeois intellectuals” were added to this ever-expanding chain to form the “stinking number-nine” (*chou laojiu*), thereby completing the list, if only metaphorically, until such widely unpopular practices were discontinued in the late 1970s.

Targeting the “new bourgeois elements” in the party, the Maoist attacks on the bureaucratization of the party-state reflected precisely this symbolic logic of incorporation, fusion, interpenetration, and reciprocal transforma-

tion. The Socialist Education or Four Cleanups Campaign, which began in 1963 with the aim of rectifying cadre abuses of power in rural areas, quickly turned to attacking former landlords and rich peasants. A party directive issued in 1964 asserted that “leadership in some places has been placed in the hand of degenerate elements; and in other places controlled by counterrevolutionaries, landlords, rich peasants, and bad elements” and, in a rhetoric anticipating that of the Cultural Revolution, called for “power seizures” (*duo quan*) to regain control.⁹⁶ Similarly, during the Cultural Revolution, one of the chief ideological justifications of continuing the class struggle was that a significant number of veteran revolutionaries and party cadres had been controlled or possessed by alien class forces and had degenerated into representatives of the bourgeoisie. According to this view, a hodgepodge of historically designated class enemies—bourgeoisie, landlords, KMT functionaries, and imperialist agents—“had wormed into the party.” These capitalist roaders not only represented the bourgeoisie and landlords but also were often hidden enemies to begin with. For example, Liu Shaoqi—the primary target of the Cultural Revolution—was officially accused not only of being a capitalist power holder but also a traitor and even a secret agent of the KMT. These wildly flimsy accusations were nevertheless governed by a discernible ideological logic, according to which the most sinister danger to the revolution was posed by disguised enemies who had infiltrated from without. “The enemy in daylight look like men, in darkness devils,” an official statement proclaimed at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. “To your face, they speak human language, behind your back the language of devils. They are wolves clad in skins of sheep, man-eating smiling tigers.”⁹⁷

Indeed, the ubiquitous stress during the Cultural Revolution on the class enemy invoked a political vocabulary of demonic threat that centered on surviving residues, concealed aliens, and their metamorphosing powers. Although the majority of class enemies were little more than sociological fossils, this did not make the scheme any less real or powerful. Its real effects lay in the fact that the millions of people branded with tainted class labels supplied recognizable human faces that made tangible the abstract discourse as well as the popular understanding of class. Instead of giving rise to a conception of class adequate to Chinese socialism, the reification of class and compression of class analyses centering on old and new—or pre-revolutionary and postrevolutionary—social relationships ended up creating a hopelessly incoherent ideological space in which sharply different politics of class interpenetrated and fused, and in which new types of social conflict were depicted as a continuation of the titanic battles of the past between the revolutionary forces and the agents of the ancien régime.

The assimilation of the new-class calculus into the objectifying old-class discourse had far-reaching consequences for the Cultural Revolution. The mass movement of the Cultural Revolution began in August 1966 with Mao's call to rebel against degenerate officials and to attack bourgeois figures and ideas. As I will discuss later in the book, the movement quickly developed into a violent assault by the Red Guards from proletarian class origins on people with impure class affiliations. While the movement escalated into rebel attacks against party officials and offices, the absence of clearly defined objectives and targets resulted in the degeneration of the movement into pervasive factional conflicts. Demobilization and restoration of order were achieved by political recentralization and deploying the army. In the last great campaign of the Cultural Revolution in 1968–1969, the prelude to the full restoration of the party, the movement of “purifying the class ranks” investigated the class identity and history of millions and targeted the undesirable ones. The Cultural Revolution reached one new height of political intensity after another in such circles of reciprocal symbolic transformation of the old and new class enemies and in fiercely battling with the numerous alleged contemporary agents of the ancien régime. It is profoundly ironic that after Mao's death in 1976, the defeat of the Maoist clique—the infamous Gang of Four—was once again represented as a life-and-death struggle between the proletariat and an amorphous bourgeoisie.⁹⁸ Zhang Chunqiao, Mao's most trusted theoretician, was depicted as a CCP renegade and KMT special agent; Yao Wenyuan, as an offspring of a reactionary landlord; and Wang Hongwen, the Shanghai rebel leader handpicked by Mao to become the vice chairman of the CCP, as a new bourgeois element and a representative of the old bourgeoisie. The Gang of Four episode of the late 1970s was the last gasp of the language and discourse of class that dominated the Cultural Revolution decade, the dissolution of which effectively marked the closure of the Mao era.

IN THIS CHAPTER, I have argued that the prevailing discourse and practice of class before the Cultural Revolution was fraught with ambiguities that would have fateful consequences for the mass politics of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution began with a call to attack party cadres but ended with a campaign stressing old-class identities. This marked a profound shift on the issue of defining class in socialist China. But the political significance of the equivalency between the new and old classes was rather contradictory, to say the least. On the one hand, this relationship made it possible to frame abuses of powerless old-class tar-

gets as acts of major political significance; on the other hand, it made possible an understanding of attacks on party-state authorities as class struggle. “The dialogue of class struggle,” as Fredric Jameson pointed out, “is one in which opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code.”⁹⁹ Similarly, as the rest of this book will show, the Cultural Revolution’s dominant language and ideology of class could be subject to interpretations of quite different kinds, sometimes with profoundly unsettling political implications.

The Cultural Revolution began for the most part as a revolution from above, or as “mass participation in bureaucratic politics,” as Andrew Walder has put it.¹⁰⁰ But as the movement continued, many long-standing social and political issues resurfaced in a new circumstance in which public order had virtually collapsed. More than a decade and half after the victory of the Communist-led revolution, popular resentment of bureaucratic privileges and cadre abuses of power was widespread, and many citizens were only too eager to take advantage of the newly proclaimed right to rebel against established authorities. The mass political activism characteristic of the Cultural Revolution, however, was not necessarily the direct expression of preexisting social discontent and grievances. Rather, this activism was often the result of novel forms of political language and action in a turbulent process that few participants fully comprehended. In espousing explosive slogans such as “Bombard the headquarters” and “Rebellion is justified,” Mao—China’s party chief turned rebel leader—set in motion new dynamics that radically disrupted the existing arrangements of politics. With the abrupt separation of Mao’s charismatic authority from the party apparatus, superior political understanding was no longer the monopoly of the party. Indeed, the basic rationale of the mass politics characteristic of the Cultural Revolution was that Mao’s Thought could be grasped directly by the general populace, unmediated by the party. Although everyone was speaking in the name of Mao, Mao’s fragmentary ideas were variously interpreted in fluid circumstances and were appropriated for diverse purposes—to rationalize interpersonal conflicts and factional rivalries, to articulate popular grievances, or to justify attacks on political authorities. And, not surprisingly, the principle of “free mobilization of the masses” could not be confined merely to abusing the familiar categories of class enemies, imagined or real. Giving new meanings to a myriad of antagonisms that had hitherto remained latent, the events of the Cultural Revolution had a logic and dynamic of their own, and in ways that neither the Supreme Leader nor any determinate political programs could fully control or even foresee. In Chapters 3 to 5, I will examine several

important instances of emergence and transformation that resulted from the fierce and inherently unstable mass politics of the Cultural Revolution by offering an account of some of the political forces that transgressed the Maoist ideology and policies, their developmental trajectories, and their specific local historical contexts.

FROM THE GOOD BLOOD TO THE RIGHT TO REBEL

Politics of Class and Citizenship in the Beijing Red Guard Movement

A FIFTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD MAN named Li Wenbo lived in the district of Chongwen in central Beijing. The state's class taxonomy labeled Li a petty merchant (*xiao yezhu*), a category of nonproletarians. On the very hot day of August 25, 1966, Red Guards who had come mostly from politically desirable or "red" families ransacked Li's home and attacked his family, now marked as targets by his class label. During the daylong ordeal, Li and his sick wife were confined to the attic without food or water. After numerous pleas, Li's wife tried to go downstairs to use the toilet, but she was roughed up. Out of exasperation, Li argued with the students, who then hit him with sticks. Finally, an enraged Li picked up a kitchen cleaver and tried to drive away the teenage students. He was beaten to death. In Beijing's Red Guard circles, the incident immediately was dramatized as an attempt by the class enemies to take revenge on the revolutionaries, and rumors were rife that "capitalists assaulted and killed the Red Guards with knives."¹

The incident in the Chongwen district had an explosive impact on the level of violence in the city, as many Red Guards sought class revenge and demanded that blood debt be repaid in blood. Thousands flocked to the neighborhood, invading homes and attacking persons of nonproletarian backgrounds. Killings of persons in the stigmatized or "black" categories occurred frequently. The top party leaders, who clearly were aware of what was going on, did little to stop the attacks.² Rampant violence against the

social aliens culminated in Daxing and Changping, two rural communities in the vicinity of Beijing. In Changping, village militiamen led by local cadres killed 327 people in late August and early September. In Daxing, 324 were killed, and twenty-two families were completely wiped out. The oldest victim was eighty years old, while the youngest was only thirty-eight days old. Telegrams reportedly were sent to the victims' family members who lived elsewhere to lure them into returning home so that the "children of dogs" could also be exterminated. "When cutting the weeds, dig up the roots as well" (*zhan cao chu gen*) was the traditional Chinese proverb used to rationalize the extermination.³

What was the political meaning of such violence against the social aliens? How do we make sense of the violence in relationship to both state-imposed class categories and the volatile mass politics of the Cultural Revolution? My purpose here is not to dramatize violence during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, it is to contextualize the spiral of violence, which was premised on particular notions of political community, purity, and pollution. More important, it is also to identify the countervailing discourses that emerged to contest the underlying ideological premises of such acts.

In this chapter, I look at two contrasting forms of interpreting class and political community—and by extension two radically different ways of understanding the meaning of the Cultural Revolution—that emerged in its ferocious mass movement. Promoted by the Red Guards, drawn mostly from children of party officials and military officers, the so-called bloodline theory or blood lineage theory (*xuetong lun*) became the prevailing interpretation of the issue of class during the early months of the Cultural Revolution. Insisting that China should be run only by those who had the finest revolutionary family pedigree—those who descended from families of party cadres and military officers or other state-designated proletarian categories, the bloodline theory was tantamount to a strict genealogical interpretation of class, whereby one's family background determined his or her class position, which then determined his or her political status. Specifically, it claimed that those who had descended from unfavorable class origins must be not only excluded from political participation but also systematically discriminated against. It became a potent ideological force behind much of the violence in what was often known as the Red Terror in late August and September 1966.

Shortly after its appearance, the bloodline theory encountered opposition and criticism from various quarters. Blossoming into full public view in late 1966 and early 1967, criticism of the bloodline theory and protest against discrimination based on state-imposed categories marked a signifi-

cant moment of interpretive multiplication and contestation. In early 1967, Yu Luo ke, a twenty-four-year-old factory apprentice, produced a series of essays that made him famous all over China and led to his arrest a year later (and eventually to his execution in 1970). What gave rise to his fame was his proclamation that every Chinese, irrespective of family background, should enjoy equal political rights. Yu Luo ke's name became the icon of one of the most important ideological battles in the Cultural Revolution, and one that had far-reaching political ramifications.

The bloodline episode has been the subject of a number of scholarly discussions, mostly explaining the debate in terms of competing social interests arising from long-standing divisions in Chinese society. The conflict over class origins, as Hong Yung Lee put it, "was not an empty ideological dispute, but a real political issue involving the basic interests of the various social groups."⁴ Cadres' children had a stake in perpetuating a rigid view of class that maintained their own position while hindering children of pre-revolutionary elites. For Richard Kraus, the debate was "distinguished by the fact that the competing groups understood different criteria to constitute 'class.'" "The militant members of the five red categories insisted that the inherited family background was the proper index of class," while children of the former elites "had an obvious stake" in challenging the system.⁵ This also was the view of Maurice Meisner, who argued that the divisions in the Red Guard movement were "eminent rational expressions of conflicting social interests."⁶ This seems to explain a paradox that became increasingly evident as the Cultural Revolution movement unfolded. "At first glance," observed Lee, it seems paradoxical that "the students with 'bad' family origins displayed more revolutionary enthusiasm and a true 'rebel spirit,' whereas the children of cadres protected the party leaders and stood on the conservative side."⁷ This puzzle, however, dissipates upon a closer examination of the students' actual social positions, as Meisner wrote:

The onetime revolutionaries, who came mostly from the poorer peasantry and the working class, were, along with their children, favored for political positions, educational opportunities, and employment after 1949. . . . The children of former capitalists, ex-landlords, and intellectuals, on the other hand, labored under various forms of social, economic, and political discrimination. . . . Whereas those who could claim lowly class origins . . . had a conservative stake in the postrevolutionary order and its new inequalities, the offspring of the former ruling classes were the new underprivileged. It is hardly surprising that the latter responded so enthusiastically to radical Maoist critiques of bureaucratic privilege and calls for greater equality, while the former rallied to the defense of the Party and channeled their "revolutionary" energies into assaults against the offspring of the former privileged social classes.⁸

Focusing on the bloodline episode, this chapter explores the complex and protean meanings of class in relationship to notions of citizenship and political community. How did political representations come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities despite shared notions of revolutionary history and symbolism? The chapter begins with a discussion of the rise of the bloodline notion in the early Red Guard movement. It then proceeds to an account of the emergence of a counterdiscourse that challenged the prevailing interpretation of class. Through a close reading of Yu Luoke's writings, my aim is to reveal the broader significance of this critical discourse as going beyond narrowly conceived group interests—as Joel Andreas has put it, perhaps with a touch of irony, “children of intellectuals battling children of communist cadres.”⁹ Building on existing scholarship and using newly available sources, I argue that the critique of the bloodline theory marked a significant moment of political and ideological emergence. Rejecting a rigid statist politics that reified social and class relationships, the aspirations of Yu and his comrades were distinguished by their emphasis on moral autonomy and human dignity as central to the socialist project. In fashioning a new political analysis of Chinese socialism that transgressed the official doctrine, Yu Luoke developed ideas that went beyond their immediate circumstances and transcended the particular interests and identities of specific social groups. The key issues raised here therefore pertain to how specific grievances and larger causes interpenetrated one another: the protest against social and political discrimination and the struggle for human dignity and citizenship became intertwined with the struggle to radically transform class relations in Chinese socialism.

Proletarian Purity

The bloodline theory was an extreme ideological expression of crucial aspects of Chinese society before the Cultural Revolution. One of the main structuring principles of Chinese society during much of the Mao era, as I noted in Chapter 2, was the hierarchical distribution of sociopolitical merits (and demerits) based on state-imposed categories of class. Beginning in the early 1960s, as I described earlier, young people from stigmatized family backgrounds increasingly found their educational opportunities blocked and their career horizons narrowed. At the same time, aggressive measures were adopted to enhance the chances of students of red origins, especially those from cadre and military backgrounds. Children of cadres often attended special boarding schools that accommodated mostly or even exclusively the offspring of the country's new political elite. Beijing's Yuying Pri-

mary School, for example, accepted only children of ambassadors, attachés, and cadres above the ranks of bureau and section chief, and the May 1, August 1, and October 1 Schools accepted only children of senior People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers above the ranks of lieutenant and general. In 1966, over thirty such schools were in operation in Beijing alone.¹⁰ As later exposed in Red Guard publications, these schools were characterized by "three mores" (*san duo*). First, they were usually better staffed, typically with a staff-to-student ratio of between 1 to 5 and 1 to 7, while the average ratio was between 1 to 28 and 1 to 35. Second, their budget was normally twenty to thirty times more than the average. Third, they were larger in physical size and much better equipped. For example, the 200,000-square-meter campus of the August 1 School occupied the garden-style palace of a Qing-dynasty royal prince. In addition to a garden, a swimming pool, a bathhouse, a clinic, and a laundry house, the school even had a zoo.¹¹ These schools later were castigated as "little treasure pagodas" (*xiao baota*) during the Cultural Revolution. In less exclusive schools, the preoccupation with purity of family pedigree also produced "classes for high-level cadres' children" (*gaogan ban*), in which various special treatments were offered.¹²

In the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution, successive political campaigns were conducted to fortify proletarian class feeling among the young generation and arouse class hatred against the enemies. Students from undesirable class backgrounds were exhorted to stand firm against influences from their families.¹³ The class-struggle motif lent extra intensity to the sense that the revolution was under siege from both within and without. One Chinese scholar recalled that during her school trip to the countryside "to learn from the peasants," her school's administrators admonished the students that they should avoid contact with the local peasants. "They said that the class situation in the rural area was very complicated, so don't greet anybody you meet and address a stranger as 'uncle' or 'aunt.' You could be talking to a former landlord or rich peasant." Another recalled a discussion in her political education class, in which a classmate raised a hypothetical question: "If you see a man drowning but don't know his class status, would you throw yourself into the water to save his life? What if the person turns out to be a former landlord? Is it worth risking your life?" We had endless debate. Some argued that there would be no time to find out a dying person's class status, and one should simply jump into the water to save a life. Other asked what if he *was* a former landlord? . . . Even the teacher didn't know the answer."¹⁴

Encouraged by the intensifying class rhetoric, a growing number of students from politically powerful families felt that their superior pedigree should assure their bright future. The term "cadre's children" (*ganbu zidi*)

came into circulation in the mid-1960s, signaling the increasing closure of China's new political elite and their offspring. One recalled: "I became aware of a special responsibility I had as a cadre's child. Until this point I was ignorant about family background and stuff like that. Right after I started secondary school, we were asked to fill out a personal information sheet in which there was a question about family background. I asked my father what to write and he said, 'just write down *zhiyuan* [staff member].' . . . But before long I began to realize that I was in a 'red' category as a revolutionary cadre's child. It made me feel really good . . . [and] I started to hang around with girls from the similar family background."¹⁵ Many believed that being red by birth meant that they were more revolutionary by nature and hence entitled to inherit positions of power. Their sense of special political status reflected the paradoxical combination of vested self-interests and a largely genuine but inflated sense of revolutionary idealism that resulted from their self-perceived special bonds with China's revolutionary struggles, in which their parents had fought heroically.

Such sentiments were especially strong in Beijing, where students from cadre families were concentrated. Theoretically, the red categories would include all the official proletarian categories, including not only revolutionary cadres and revolutionary soldiers but also workers and peasants. The actual composition of students in Beijing, however, was highly skewed. As Beijing was not a major industrial center, its working-class population was small.¹⁶ An amorphous aggregation of petty traders, artisans, hired laborers, monks and nuns, fortune-tellers, traditional performers, and government clerks, as well as members of liberal professions, such as teachers and doctors, had made up the demographic mosaic of prerevolutionary Beijing. Beginning in the late 1950s, the newly imposed *hukou* (household registration) system effectively barred rural peasants from living in cities and thereby prevented peasants' children from going to urban schools. Thus, because of the virtual absence of peasants and an underdeveloped working class, the student population in Beijing was divided between a minority from cadre and military families and a majority from various nonred categories of urbanites, as well as those from black households.

As the class rhetoric became more belligerent, tensions in schools grew, and boundaries between students of different social backgrounds hardened. A number of student groups sprang up in Beijing's elite middle schools on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, mainly composed of children of cadres and PLA officers. These students expressed concern that existing educational policies had discriminated against proletarian students while favoring those of bourgeois origins. Calling themselves "Red Guards," these fledgling groups would soon become the vanguard of the

Cultural Revolution.¹⁷ The continuing existence, though in diminished form, of prerevolutionary cultural inequalities took on explosive ideological significance, as these inequalities symbolized the remnants of an exploiting class in the new society. On the eve of the Cultural Revolution, tensions among Beijing's students were pronounced. Everyday disputes in the classroom became aggregated and assimilated into larger issues of national political importance. The fixation on class as an official political category and its prominence in the national discourse crystallized the students' awareness of differences in social backgrounds and identities. Soon these divisions would explode in the Cultural Revolution and amplify into irreconcilable rifts between students of different social origins.

The explosion was triggered in the summer of 1966 when China's youth were called to participate in the Cultural Revolution. At the start of the turmoil, Liu Shaoqi, then president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), dispatched party work teams to take control of schools with the aim of supervising surging student activism. The work teams employed the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) long-established methods of top-down, bureaucratic mobilization and insisted on a more orderly course of class struggle. This approach, however, antagonized militant students, who asserted their right to conduct the movement in accordance with their interpretation of Mao's call for rebellion.¹⁸ In the early summer of 1966, student groups named Red Guard proliferated in the capital. At the Tsinghua University Middle School, where the first Red Guard cell was formed, the work team closely followed the party's class-line policy, relying on the so-called "leftist" students as defined by class origins.¹⁹ However, new conflicts quickly developed over the students' attempts to broaden the hunt for enemies. Students invoked Mao's authority in accusing the work team of suppressing their rebellion, whereas the work team viewed such gestures as a challenge to party discipline. Mao ordered the withdrawal of work teams in late July and castigated them harshly because they "had obstructed the mass movement and revolutionary forces."²⁰ With Mao's strong support for the students, the party's long-standing restriction on independent student organizations collapsed, and within days numerous Red Guard groups appeared.

The political significance of the early Red Guard movement was multifaceted. On the one hand, it embodied one of the central tenets of Cultural Revolution doctrine—"free mobilization of the masses." In popularizing Mao's slogan "To rebel is justified" and in defying party discipline, the Red Guard movement brought a new model of direct political action to the Chinese political arena. On the other hand, the spontaneity of the "revolutionary young people" (*geming xiaojiang*) was spearheaded by students of politically privileged origins who, through mobilizing a particular discourse

of China's revolutionary history, felt that they had exclusive rights to control and limit this discourse. In conceiving of themselves as the chosen successors of the revolution and natural rulers in the socialist state, many of them fervently attacked a largely imaginary and scapegoated bourgeoisie construed in accordance with state-imposed categories.

The appearance of the bloodline theory coincided with the explosion of the Red Guard movement. With the collapse of party authorities at schools, the party's class-line policy—an inherently ambiguous doctrine—was catapulted into the volatile world of mass politics and became subject to conflicting interpretations by social agents of different kinds. Several Red Guard documents were instrumental in this doctrine's dissemination. The first was a leaflet titled "Long Live the Proletarian Class Line," produced by Tsinghua Middle School students. In this text, cadre students developed a distinct interpretation of the class line by emphasizing their role as China's ruling elite. Openly defending the idea that political status should be hereditary, they called on youth of the red categories—children of cadres in particular—to organize their class force on the exclusive basis of class origins. They were convinced that as children of veteran revolutionaries, they had a unique responsibility as well as entitlement during the Cultural Revolution, while descendants of the bourgeoisie should be treated as targets: "We must rebel and seize power . . . we must greatly promote the class line and stress class background. In the Cultural Revolution . . . most bastards from bad class backgrounds have performed terribly badly. If we cannot count on the children of workers, peasants, and revolutionary cadres, whom can we count on? Should we count on scoundrels like the landlord-bourgeoisie young masters and mistresses . . . ? No, the leadership must be firmly controlled by us, the children of workers, peasants, and revolutionary cadres." According to the leaflet, although it might be possible for black youth to be politically remolded, this would require a Herculean effort of "drawing out guts and replacing bones" (*tuotai huan'gu*), without which they could only be "dominated perpetually."²¹

Titled "The Born-Reds Have Stood Up," the second bloodline statement was created by the students of the Beijing University Attached Middle School. The term "born-reds" or "natural-born reds" (*zilaihong*) reflected the exaggerated sense of political superiority of cadres' children: "We are the natural-born rebels. We are born into this world only to rebel against the bourgeoisie and carry the great proletarian revolutionary banner. Sons must succeed the power seized by their fathers. This is called passing the power on from generation to generation." In this view, cadres' offspring enjoyed distinctive political entitlements. Their moral concep-

tions of the world were defined by their understanding of the revolutionary legacy they had supposedly inherited from their parents: “The revolutionary spirit of our fathers has penetrated into our bodies. We’re soaking red throughout. ‘Born-red’ explains how the tradition of the old revolutionaries has been passed on to the younger generation! We have absolutely the purest proletarian bloodline and have received a genuine revolutionary education!”²² In an extreme version of the idea of natural-born redness, a poster spotted in late July claimed that cadres’ children were different from the day of birth. While the first word ordinary babies uttered was “mama,” the former were able to call out “Long live Chairman Mao.”²³

The best-known bloodline statement appeared in the traditional Chinese literary form of the couplet (*duilian*) and was colloquially referred to as the “bloodline couplet.”²⁴ It first appeared in late July 1966, but its exact origin was little known as Red Guard groups at several schools claimed authorship, and each probably played some role in its various incarnations. The couplet proclaimed the hereditary permanence of political reliability and status and called for the exclusion of anyone of bad class origins: “If the father is a [revolutionary] hero, the son is also a hero; if the father is a reactionary, the son is a bastard” (*laozi yingxiong er haohan, laozi fandong er hundan*). A third, horizontal piece (*hengpi*) read: “It is basically like this” (*jiben ruci*). The horizontal piece sometimes had the more extreme form “It is absolutely like this” (*juedui ruci*), suggesting that advocates of the bloodline theory might have had disagreements about exactly how much weight should be assigned to class origins. Once the couplet came into circulation, it was subject to modification, and many versions appeared, including several that were adapted musically. In one version, an additional unflattering line was added to indicate the inferior status of those whose class backgrounds were neither unmistakably black nor red: “If the father is an undistinguished man, then the son must be a fence-sitter” (*laozi pingchang er qiqiang*). A handbill issued in September 1967 collected a dozen versions of the couplet. Here are a few typical ones:

Fathers rebelled for the people to eliminate the cow demons,
Sons rebel for the revolution to sweep away the snake spirits.
Rebel, rebel!

The forebearers eliminated hordes of demons with great carnage
and hacking,
The descendants subdue ghosts and monsters with ferocious
suppression and slashing.
Who dares to overturn heaven?!

Fathers made revolution with a forest of rifles and a sea of bullets
 to combat the mass of demons,
 Sons make rebellion with sincerity and courage to mop up the
 horde of bastards.
 Long live rebellion!

My father made revolution, so I make revolution, and that's
 the way it is,
 Your mom farts, so your farts stink up the air.
 Essential character is impossible to change.

The revolutionary red descendants swear a martial oath to heroically
 display their might,
 The reactionary sons of bitches see the revolutionary couplets and
 the devils become worried.
 It's entirely like this.

My father is a revolutionary, so I inherit the pledge to protect the
 rivers and mountains by being born red;
 Your father is a criminal, so don't you fight, or it'll serve you right for
 having the luck to be born black.
 The facts are like this.

In those days the old anti-Communist bastards served as Chiang
 Kai-shek's running dogs;
 Today the little bastards resist the revolution by serving as vigorous
 pioneers [of counterrevolution].
 The whole family are criminals.²⁵

With the division of the student body into separate categories, the early Red Guards (also known as *lao hongweibing* or “Old Red Guards”) took class origin as the most important criterion for membership, demanding that only those of the purest bloodline would be eligible, and all those not from red origins would be excluded. Even among the students from red origins, an internal hierarchy of statuses emerged that further distinguished different hues of redness. A strictly defined pecking order emerged to mirror the pre-Cultural Revolution political hierarchy: children of senior army officers enjoyed the highest status, then sons and daughters of civilian state cadres, followed by youth with working-class background and finally students from peasant families at the base. At some schools in Beijing, Red Guard membership was so narrowly defined that even students whose parents' official ranks were not high enough were disqualified.²⁶ By stating that only children of “revolutionary heroes” or senior officials were politically worthy, the bloodline principle also sidelined many students of worker and peasant origins. One participant wrote decades later: “The

bloodline couplet asserted the absolutely dominant position of the cadres' children among the 'five-red-category' students. It claimed very clearly that sons could become 'heroes' only if their fathers were '[revolutionary] heroes.' There were some people at the time who would cite Mao's remark 'the masses are the real heroes' to interpret this. But in the specific historical situation of 1966, only the first [narrower] interpretation predominated."²⁷

In Beijing, where there were few industrial workers or peasants, only around 15 to 20 percent of middle-school students were eligible for Red Guard membership.²⁸ When students from mixed family backgrounds formed their own groups, they were often forced to disband because of impure class affiliation. Some were allowed to join groups called the "Red Outer Circle" (*hong waiwei*), but they enjoyed only second-class status. At the Beijing No. 6 Middle School, for example, where the Red Guards set up a notoriously brutal jailhouse to torment the victims, some students from politically less pure categories were allowed to become part of a "Red Allied Army" (*hong lian jun*), serving as night-shift jail guards but not allowed to participate in interrogations or beatings.²⁹ The class requirement for Red Guard membership often was followed so scrupulously that genealogy was traced back to grandparents or remote relatives.³⁰ In some schools, the Red Guards publicized the family backgrounds of all the students and ordered that politically impure students enter the classroom only through the back entrance.³¹ In other cases, studying Mao's works was used as a punitive measure. The "bastards" had to study Mao's works all day long, but students of ordinary class origins needed to spend only a few hours daily, and the "heroes" could make revolution in whatever ways they wanted.³² While students from black families were often subject to humiliation and abuses, the Red Guards enjoyed immense privileges, including the right of being inspected by Mao. What was particularly valued was the right to abuse the black gang physically and to conduct home raids, considered a form of revolutionary honor reserved for the bona fide Red Guards. Many posters produced in the late summer of 1966 began by stating the genealogical purity of the authors and asserting that they belonged to the red categories and had the right to political speech. An extreme case of the bloodline theory in practice, in which blood took on more literal than symbolic meaning, may be seen in a poster titled "Urgent Appeal" to prohibit hospitals from giving blood transfusions "from the proletarian brothers to the seven bad elements." Complaining that blood donation "has lost its revolutionary character" and "violated the party's class-line policy" because of contaminated supply from "bastards and hoodlums," the poster urged that, first, blood donors should be limited only

to “revolutionary comrades,” second, the stigmatized categories must not be allowed to receive blood transfusions from “proletarian brothers,” and third, they must be banned from taking part in the blood-donation program.³³

Festivals of Red Violence

With its emphasis on social origins and contamination by the past, the bloodline principle became the ideological driving force behind much of the violence in the late summer and early fall of 1966. In late August, with slogans such as “Making the world extraordinarily proletarianized and revolutionized,” Beijing’s Red Guards began a ferocious campaign to rid the city of aspects of its everyday life ostensibly incompatible with strictly prescribed notions of revolutionary virtue, ruthlessly attacking religious artifacts, temples, shrines, statues, old books, or anything symbolizing Western or capitalist society or associated with China’s premodern past.

The rest of the story is well known. Within days, Beijing’s urban cultural landscape came under fierce assault. In Beijing and elsewhere in China, names of streets and public places were changed to expunge allegedly feudal or bourgeois influences. Historical sites and artifacts became the targets of destruction. Buddhist icons, sculptures, plaques, and literary inscriptions were destroyed and replaced by images of Mao. In Beijing alone, from mid-August to September, at least 4,922 of the ancient capital’s officially designated historical sites were damaged or destroyed.³⁴ China’s most precious national treasury, the Imperial Palace, survived without destruction only because Premier Zhou Enlai ordered that it be locked down and posted troops to guard its gates.³⁵ Even the city of Beijing (literally meaning “Northern Capital”) almost lost its name: some thirty-four Red Guard groups jointly proposed to rename Beijing East Is Red City and planned to hold a massive ceremony in Tiananmen Square on September 27 during which the stone lions and dragon-engraved stone columns in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace—the traditional Chinese symbol of imperial power—would be smashed and replaced by gigantic sculptures of Mao and Communist revolutionary heroes. Their plan was suspended only through the intervention of Premier Zhou, who, incidentally, was urged by some Red Guards to change his name to East Is Red Number 3.³⁶

The everyday life of urban Beijing was under relentless attack. Barber-shops, photo studios, and tailors were ordered not to do any work that ran counter to proletarian morality. Young women were forced to cut their hair to ear level, and men were ordered not to have ducktail haircuts. Tight-fitting jeans, high-heeled shoes, and Western-style coats were pro-

hibited as signs of a bourgeois lifestyle. The Red Guards set up street checkpoints called “stations of smashing the old and erecting the new” to impose revolutionary haircuts or a proletarian dress code. The campaign against the “Four Olds” (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits) also attacked the remaining privileges enjoyed by the former elites and other urbanites in the name of eradicating bourgeois lifestyles. In a statement titled “One Hundred Items for Destroying the Old and Erecting the New,” the Red Guards at Beijing No. 26 Middle School issued the following injunctions:

- Laundries must cease washing pants, stockings, and handkerchiefs for those bourgeois wives, misses, and young gentlemen.
- Public baths must refuse serving those bourgeois sons of bitches. Don’t give them massage baths, footrubs, and backrubs.
- The bastards of the bourgeoisie are not allowed to hire maids. Whoever dares to violate this rule will be severely punished.
- Landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and rightists who have deposits in banks are not allowed to take even a penny for themselves.
- Scoundrels of the bourgeoisie are not allowed to wander around or visit parks as a way to enjoy their leisure.
- Landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, and capitalists must wear plaques to identify themselves as monsters and freaks.
- All monsters and freaks are forbidden to receive salaries without the approval of the masses. They will get only enough to keep them alive.
- Restaurants can no longer serve bastards of the bourgeoisie. Service personnel are not allowed to respond to their senseless demands and prepare them delicacies from mountains and seas.³⁷

Nonred students in the provinces also were warned not to travel to Beijing, as the red capital was declared off limits to the “bastards.” When customers entered restaurants, they often had to state their class identity, and black categories would be refused service; people with bad class status or origin were not welcome on buses, so they had to pretend to be workers; doctors of bourgeois background were afraid to operate on a proletarian patient lest they be accused of class revenge if the operation failed; patients were asked to disclose their class status, and black categories often were refused treatment.³⁸ The Red Guards’ attempt to purify society culminated in the campaign to purge the city of anyone who did not belong to “the people,” in order to make the capital “as pure and clean [*chunjing*] as crystal.” Between late August and mid-September 1966, as

many as 77,000 were banished from Beijing to the remote countryside, including the following:

- Members of the “five black categories” or *hei wu lei* (landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists), 37,000
- Enemy military, government, police, and military police personnel, 1,600
- Capitalists, 5,500
- Petty property owners, proprietors, and peddlers, 200
- People with problematic political past or dubious lifestyle, 2,400
- Others, 500
- Dependents of the above, 30,000³⁹

Most of the violence during the late summer of 1966 was perpetuated by dispersed and mobile bands of teenage students. Mao was clearly aware of the escalating violence, but his position oscillated and was contradictory at best. As early as August 20, Mao wrote tersely in the margins of a situation report on the Red Guards’ campaign: “Have read. This is fantastic. [This helps] thoroughly expose the cow demons and snake monsters.”⁴⁰ At a Politburo meeting on August 21, Mao instructed that “we should advocate *wendou* [struggle with words] and oppose *wudou* [struggle with violence].” At the same meeting, however, he remarked that “we should not interfere. Let the turmoil continue for a few more months.”⁴¹ At another meeting on August 23, Mao mentioned favorably a *People’s Daily* editorial admonishing against unrestrained violence, but he also noted that the Cultural Revolution in Beijing appeared to be “too civil,” and that “there was not yet enough chaos” (*luan de bu lihai*).⁴² Although the explosion of violence needed little more than the absence of explicit dissuasion from a party leadership that was itself in paralysis, these acts were apparently tolerated by the leadership and even endorsed by the official media. At the height of the Red Terror, on August 23, all major papers carried a report titled “Waves of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution Rolled onto the Streets of the Capital.” The *People’s Daily* ran two front-page editorials with the glowing titles “This Is Excellent!” and “Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Must Resolutely Support the Revolutionary Students.”⁴³ Also, the forced repatriation of social aliens simply could not have been implemented without assistance from various government organs, including the police and neighborhood party committees. However, there is scant evidence to suggest that the drive was centrally directed to any significant extent. Violence during the early weeks of the Red Guard movement occurred at the unique juncture of frenzied student activism and bureaucratic paralysis. Many officials simply were unsure how to respond or too afraid to respond lest

they end up on the wrong side and be accused of obstructing the Cultural Revolution. Evidently, there was no clear-cut, centrally imposed model for the enthusiastic youths to emulate, except for the generally accepted ideological tenet that revolutionary successors must relentlessly battle against insidious class enemies.

In the chaotic theater of violence that swept Beijing and other major Chinese cities in the late summer and early fall of 1966, the Red Guards, often with the acquiescence or even assistance of local police and party agencies, raided and ransacked tens of thousands of homes of people belonging to the tainted class categories, seizing property and humiliating or physically attacking those with political blemishes. In early September, the CCP Beijing Municipal Committee decreed that “the phenomenon of indiscriminately beating people to death must be resolutely ended,” and that “identities of five black categories, except those actively committing crimes, should not be disclosed to the masses.”⁴⁴ But such intervention from a faltering party apparatus was too little and too late. Although large-scale killings such as the previously mentioned Daxing massacre were rare, scattered killings of black categories occurred daily. From late August to late September, according to official statistics, at least 1,772 individuals were killed in Beijing alone, and 33,600 homes were raided and ransacked.⁴⁵ For many youngsters who regretted only that they had been born too late to be part of the generation of revolutionary heroes, violent acts served as the symbolic rite of passage to transform themselves imaginarily into revolutionary warriors. Being part of a grand historical drama that followed what Charles Tilly called a historically established “repertoire” or script of collective actions,⁴⁶ the students reenacted the violent struggles characteristic of China’s revolutionary peasant war by competing feverishly to prove their hatred for the largely imagined class enemies. In the late summer and early fall of 1966, a particularly narrow interpretation of class—crystallized in the bloodline theory, with its emphasis on the privilege of the red youth and the polluting powers of black categories—became the driving force of the raging Red Guard movement.

Birth of a Big Poisonous Weed

Although few people openly criticized or opposed Red Guard violence, skepticism of the rampant violence against the Four Olds and class aliens appeared as soon as the Red Terror started. In a diary entry dated August 22, 1966, Yu Luoke, who would become the best-known critic of the ideological premises of Red Guard violence, wrote sarcastically, “I hear that

the Red Guards changed the names of all the shops at Wangfujing. Now there are at least five streets in the city called East Is Red Avenue, and over fifty shops with the name of Red Flag. It seems that anything that might evoke memories of the old time must now be obliterated. Yet the new world is so lacking in substance—no wonder all we have is over fifty red flags!” Yu’s diary entry for August 23 contained the following passage: “I went to Wangfujing today to take a look. It’s chaotic and all messed up. Most of the shops’ name placards were smashed. Rongbaozai [a bookstore specializing in antique books] was all but destroyed. Some even suggest that books in the Municipal Library that do not conform to Mao Zedong Thought should be burned. . . . I hear that the Red Guards ransacked some homes just with the excuse that Chairman Mao’s portrait was not found, or behind the Chairman’s portrait there were other photos. Whenever they found translations of foreign novels, they burned them. This is really like ‘burning books and burying the literati alive’ [*fen shu keng ru*].”⁴⁷

Similar doubts were expressed by Mu Zhijing, a student at Beijing No. 4 Middle School and later a key member of Yu Luoke’s group. Mu recalled in a later interview: “There were so many things that I did not understand from the beginning. When I heard the painful screaming of those being beaten in the school’s private jail [*niupeng*], I became skeptical of the whole matter for the first time. I witnessed that teachers were dragged around and paraded in the school, the students pouring urine and feces on them, teachers committing suicide every few days, the Red Guards pulling the denounced from trucks and whipping them in public, and female students forced to raise their buttocks while being spanked. When I saw these, I asked myself for the very first time: Why is this? What kind of world is this?” Mu was excluded from the revolutionary ranks because of his family background. “When Red Guard organizations were being formed, I tried to join,” recalled Mu. “But at the time the qualification was one’s family background, and students from nonred families were barred. In this way, students were suddenly divided into two categories with different statuses: on one side, the haughty ‘heroes,’ and on the other, the ‘bastards’ or ‘children of dogs.’”⁴⁸ Mu’s doubts grew as the movement continued. “How could this be correct? I carefully studied party documents and *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in order to seek theoretical justification. I rode my bicycle to the Tsinghua University Attached Middle School—the birthplace of the Red Guards—to put up a poster critical of the bloodline couplet. I expected trouble. But on that day the campus was quiet and largely empty, and I returned safely.”⁴⁹

Arguments over class origins broke out shortly after the appearance of the bloodline couplet (for the Red Guards’ “war of couplets” over the

bloodline theory, see Figure 2). Initial disagreements came mostly from within the ranks of red students because others kept their heads down to avoid trouble. Criticisms of the bloodline couplet varied, ranging from the view that the couplet did not facilitate “ideological remolding of cadres’ children” and did not help “unity with the majority” to the view that the cadres’ children were “arrogant.” Although many students from cadre families applauded the couplet, others countered that if class origins were to be traced back for several generations, even those belonging to the red categories might turn into bastards. He Yanguang, a junior-high-school student and cadre’s son, recalled his ambivalence:

I initially put down “revolutionary soldier” for my family background because I believed that it had greater merit than the category of “revolutionary cadre.” . . . But I didn’t feel very confident. If the family history was to be checked several generations back, it would be discovered that my grandfather was in fact a landlord! Thinking about this, I felt I was like a wilted eggplant after being hit by the frost. In joining the Red Guards, I was really nervous that people might ask about my family background. If nobody asked, I could boast that I was from the family of a revolutionary cadre. I was most afraid of filling out personal information forms. Whenever I had to mention my grandfather, I got very nervous. I felt quite ambivalent about the bloodline theory. On the one hand, I was determined to join the revolution, but I was also afraid that I would not be fully trusted given that my family’s class origin was not impeccably pure.⁵⁰

In another case, Chen Xiaolu, son of Marshal Chen Yi, told a story about a student whose father was a PLA general publicly identifying himself as the child of a counterrevolutionary as a self-mocking gesture of disagreement with the bloodline doctrine.⁵¹ Most of the dissenting views, however, questioned the bloodline couplet without criticizing its underlying ideological premises. A former Red Guard at the Beijing No. 2 Middle School later recalled: “The majority of the students agreed with the couplet, and the critics were a minority. I didn’t agree with it. . . . In our class meeting discussing the couplet, I argued that the couplet intended well and it was for the interest of the revolution, but it wasn’t articulated properly. It neither accurately conformed to the party’s class policy nor benefited the unity with and ideological remolding of offspring of the black categories.”⁵² For many, differences between reified social categories were taken as given, and debates focused only on how such differences should be dealt with.

During the summer of 1966, many debate meetings (*bianlun hui*) were held to discuss the bloodline couplet. At these meetings, it was customary for one to report his or her class background before speaking. “Natural-born



Figure 2. The war of couplets: couplets (*duilian*) containing conflicting or opposing political messages over the issue of family class origins on a Tsinghua University dormitory building, August/September 1966. Courtesy of Sun Weifan.

reds” often bickered among themselves about the relative superiority of various shades of redness. At one such meeting, some students argued over who could use the microphone. Those from proletarian households claimed that they should go first because the “working class leads all.” Those from cadre households argued that because their parents had shed blood and made sacrifices, they deserved the special right.⁵³ Mu Zhijing recollected his experience at one of these meetings: “The speakers argued passionately. Most of them, however, favored the couplet. I requested permission to speak. The chair asked me if I was for or against the couplet. I said I was against it. At that time I had little real theoretical understanding. My objection was purely intuitive; I just thought that it was absurd. But I didn’t manage to speak much when several female students dressed in army uniforms jumped on the stage and grabbed my megaphone and spat on my face.”⁵⁴ Refusing to accept humiliation, the headstrong Mu put up a poster critical of the bloodline couplet under his real name. He returned a few days later to find many angry responses to his poster. In one poster, apparently penned by several female students, the authors deliberately imitated a rude masculine tone in challenging Mu: “If you bastards have balls, just come to our school and we’ll teach you a lesson!” To prove his masculinity, Mu returned to face his challengers. However, he was pleasantly surprised that the girls treated him quite warmly, “like a good friend,” and when it was time to leave, they parted with reluctance. Mu recalled another occasion when he was ordered to attend a meeting to denounce his “crime of opposing the couplet.” One student from a high cadre’s family lectured about the Red Army’s legendary Long March in the mid-1930s. The Red Army had set out from its base with a force of 300,000 but had arrived at Yan’an with only 30,000. “Let me ask you,” he screamed with great emotion, “where did the other 270,000 go?” Apparently, the message was that because the CCP had suffered great loss at the hands of its enemies, wreaking vengeance on the enemies’ descendants was fully justified. What was most memorable to Mu was the self-denunciation of a black student: “I am from a reactionary family, and I am a bastard. If you don’t accept that I am a bastard, then you’re also a bastard!”⁵⁵

National leaders’ responses to the bloodline theory were initially confusing or contradictory. The *People’s Daily* for September 15 carried a statement that “Red Guard groups must be pure, and the five red categories must constitute the main body. On the other hand, they should not ignore and shut the door to the ordinary masses.”⁵⁶ Scholarly literature on the Cultural Revolution has often attributed pro-bloodline views to “conservative” party leaders and contrary ideas to “radical Maoist leaders.”⁵⁷ This view is not fully accurate. Senior leaders such as Tao Zhu and Tan Zhenlin—who

would soon be denounced as capitalist roaders—gave encouraging signals to the red students by stressing the importance of fixed class labels.⁵⁸ And Tao Zhu commented on Red Guard membership in late August 1966: “What type of people join the ‘Red Guard?’ Much depends on their class origins. If they are from families of irreproachable origin, they are always better than those from families of questionable origin.”⁵⁹

The position of Maoist leaders was clearly much more on the critical side. They wanted to support the students’ revolutionary fervor, but they also knew well from the beginning that it was equally incorrect to focus only on class labels. Both Jiang Qing and Kang Sheng were known to have opposed some students’ plan to form class-based organizations drawing exclusively from “children of workers, peasants, and revolutionary cadres.”⁶⁰ Maoist leaders’ statements concerning class-related issues, however, were ambiguous. On a visit to Beijing University on August 24, Chen Boda, head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG), was asked whether the Red Guards should be primarily or exclusively made up of students from red origins. Chen’s reply was decidedly vague: “You talk it over among yourselves.”⁶¹ Even when Maoist leaders criticized the couplet, they often stressed that it was basically compatible with the party’s class policy. Guan Feng, a CCRG member, commented that the bloodline couplet was for “the purpose of better implementing the party’s class-line policy,” and “its fundamental spirit is good.” “The revolutionary cadres’ children,” according to Guan, “have received much positive education from their families, and they have boundless love for the Party and for Chairman Mao. On the other hand, sons and daughters of landlords, rich peasants, and bourgeois reactionaries . . . have been influenced to various degrees by the ideology of exploiting classes.” Guan then went on to suggest that the couplet was somewhat partial and might have “undesirable side effects.” “It is true that cadres’ children have received better [political] education. But whether they can become heroes depends on their participation in the revolutionary storm. . . . On the other hand, ‘if the father is reactionary, the son is also a bastard’—this slogan is tactically speaking not very wise because it does not help us win over as many people as we can.”⁶² At a rally on August 6, when Jiang Qing was asked about her position on the couplet, she replied that she did not “completely agree with it” and suggested that the couplet needed revision: “If the father is a revolutionary, the son must take over the cause; if the father is reactionary, the son must rebel” (*laozi yingxiong er jieban, laozi fandong er zaofan*). Despite her reservations, Jiang nevertheless decided to leave the matter to the students, noting that these were merely “minor issues”—“Whether you want to revise it or not, it’s all up to you.” The position of Kang Sheng, the adviser to the CCRG,

was equally unclear. Kang began his speech at the rally by saluting the Red Guards from Beijing University Attached Middle School, who were among the most vocal advocates of the bloodline theory. He praised them for “fighting for Mao Zedong’s class line” and added, “I admire you very much.” However, Kang also urged the students to “practice the party’s class policy correctly” by basing it on Mao’s criteria of “revolutionary successors”—which did not mention class origin—thereby implicitly expressing his reservations.⁶³

Significant popular opposition to the bloodline theory did not begin to build up until late 1966. From the fall of 1966, the direction of the Cultural Revolution underwent a partial but critical shift. As fracturing within the CCP leadership continued, the targets of the movement went beyond the black categories, intellectuals, and minor bureaucrats and shifted to top party officials. While the Red Guard campaign against the Four Olds continued to receive lavish praise in the media, the movement began targeting high officials in the CCP. This necessitated a revised political formula that not only identified the new targets but also mobilized the new political agency required for attacking those targets. In this context, a new national drive was initiated in October that called for the repudiation of the so-called “bourgeois reactionary line,” defined as the diversion of targets of struggle from the power holders to the masses.⁶⁴ Local party authorities were ordered to rehabilitate those branded counterrevolutionaries and black gang in the earlier months. Its convoluted rhetoric notwithstanding, the notion of the bourgeois reactionary line provided a political language that highlighted the unsavory role of party cadres during the previous months and opened the door for the attack on party organizations by those who had suffered from violent attacks earlier.

Although the Maoist leaders played a decisive role in the movement’s change of direction, the process also received strong support from many ordinary citizens and students. The repudiation of the “bourgeois reactionary line” made it possible for those who had been politically victimized or excluded to participate in the movement. For the first time, students of tainted class origins were able either to join existing Red Guard groups or simply to organize their own. A significant fissure began to emerge in the Red Guard movement as new organizations targeting party offices and officials were locked into battles with those—mostly from politically privileged families—who defended senior cadres while continuing to attack people of nonred class origins.⁶⁵ The metamorphosis of those who pioneered the slogan “To rebel is justified” into defenders of the party apparatus and officials reflected the highly volatile political dynamics of the Cultural Revolution. Fiercely defensive of the bloodline theory, these youngsters

increasingly found themselves becoming the targets of the very movement that they had spearheaded, and this was to have a significant impact on the dynamics of mobilization, as well as popular understanding of the movement.

As the focus of the Cultural Revolution shifted, Red Guard membership was no longer viewed as a sign of exclusive political distinction. Many students from politically privileged families were confused and troubled by the proliferation of new Red Guard groups and their increasingly heterogeneous membership. As one former Red Guard put it: “The political situation changed quite a bit. There were Red Guard groups everywhere, and every imaginable kind of acts of rebellion. We really didn’t like that. We were the real Red Guards—those others dared to put on the Red Guard armbands only after the Tiananmen inspection on August 18. But now they appeared to be more revolutionary and more left than anyone else. They now struggled against veteran cadres and stormed party and government offices as they pleased. We felt disgusted with these people and totally failed to comprehend this deteriorating situation.”⁶⁶ With the abrupt downfall of many high-level cadres as capitalist roaders, those born-reds who had once enjoyed power and privilege found themselves plunging to the status of bastards overnight. Many were resentful of the shift of the Cultural Revolution and of its new entrants. As another former Red Guard recalled the rapidly changing situation: “The Red Guards were no longer a sacred entity. Anybody who had the guts could organize a group or join some existing group, and the name of Red Guards became much devalued.”⁶⁷ In a letter addressed to the Beijing Red Guard Third Headquarters, a newly formed rebel organization, a group that identified itself as “Unit 7434” angrily proclaimed: “The children of revolutionary cadres and soldiers aren’t to be messed with. You sons of bitches want to overturn the heaven? In your dreams . . . ! Our actions of ‘smashing the old and establishing the new’ shook the world. How great it feels to lash and strike, and who dares to call this a blood debt! It’s surprising we didn’t beat you up during the Smashing Four Olds campaign, and it’s probably why you act so cocky now, asking for a beating! One day we will beat you to a pulp!!! Don’t think your time will last, just wait until we settle the scores. . . . We have a noble bloodline, what can you do!”⁶⁸

Perhaps to compensate for their jeopardized sense of superiority, many Red Guards from cadre families became preoccupied with conspicuously displaying the status symbols that they had vehemently repudiated in the earlier months. Many stopped wearing the washed-out army uniforms that had been the trademark of Red Guard identity. “At the beginning of

the Cultural Revolution,” one recalled, “young people favored worn-out uniforms—the older, the more worn-out, the better. The Red Guard armband was then made from narrow strips of cloth. . . . But by late 1966, those who previously had worn old army uniforms stopped doing that. For boys it was the well-tailored woolen uniforms reserved for generals and lieutenants, shiny boots, fur hats, and foot-long armbands made from silk, and girls wore long woolen scarves to highlight their privileged birth.”⁶⁹ Dispirited students from cadre families indulged in eating, drinking, dancing, and other forms of pleasure-seeking activities. Some engaged in destructive or sadistic behaviors to vent their annoyance, such as throwing bicycles off buildings, destroying or stealing school property, such as radios, telephones, and phonographs, and reportedly even blowing up cats’ anuses with firecrackers and frying cat meat using sesame oil stolen from school kitchens.⁷⁰ It is ironic that the bloodline theory would backfire against these very same youth who had been glorified as heroes only recently: not only did their once-powerful parents fall from grace, but when two or three prior generations of their genealogy were investigated, it was often found that their grandfathers or even great-grandfathers were not proletariat either. As a child of a cadre wrote about his experience as a rusticated youth in the countryside:

We were not allowed to join the poor peasant association. In the rural areas class investigation was conducted by checking out three generations, and one’s class status was determined in accordance with that of his grandfather or great-grandfather. So a number of students once considered children of revolutionary cadres suddenly found themselves falling into the category of children of landlords or rich peasants. . . . For this we argued in vain with the local cadres, reasoning that if this logic was to be consistently followed, then Chairman Mao’s son would have to have the class status of rich peasant too—how could this be possible . . . ? Eventually the Party Center in Beijing issued a directive clarifying and resolving the problem about the class status of cadres’ children.⁷¹

It was ironic that most of the top CCP leaders, including Mao and Lin Biao, did not come from pure poor peasant or working-class backgrounds.⁷²

By the late fall of 1966, the bloodline theory and its advocates came under increasing criticism from both the Maoist leaders and the many new groups open to people of diverse social backgrounds. The couplet—the traditional literary form once instrumental in the dissemination of the bloodline theory—became popular in the battles between opposing groups and factions. The Old Red Guards used the couplet form to vent displeasure about their changing political fate:

Sons of revolutionaries are jailed,
 Sons of counterrevolutionaries feel proud.
 What a bastardly world.⁷³

The newly emerging rebel Red Guards, on the other hand, produced their own couplets to mock their opponents' precipitous fall from political prominence:

How great the Red Guards once exercised the right to rebel,
 What good is their royal bloodline worth nowadays?
 The Red Guards made revolution spectacularly and deafeningly,
 The others looked on with little interest.⁷⁴

For the Maoist leadership, the bloodline ideas not only reflected the political elitism of a few but also hindered wider mass mobilization. At a party conference on October 16, Chen Boda, head of the CCRG, harshly criticized the bloodline theory, the first time a prominent national leader had done so: "A theory of 'born-redness' has become popular lately. Those advancing this fallacy actually have attacked and marginalized the children of workers and peasants. . . . They confuse some students and encourage them to present the couplet, 'If the father is a hero, the son is also a hero.'" ⁷⁵ In a speech delivered in mid-November, Jiang Qing invoked Mao's name in her objection to the bloodline principle: "Chairman Mao has said that one can choose his path, but not his birth [*chushen bu youji, daolu ke xuanze*]. Family background makes an imprint on one's development, but it doesn't play a decisive role. It's one's effort, the revolutionization of consciousness, that ultimately determines."⁷⁶ For the Maoist leaders, the bloodline notion elevated the status of cadres' children and protected their powerful parents. While criticizing the bloodline couplet, however, Jiang Qing urged those from exploiting class families to "eliminate the reactionary nature of their families and strive for complete betrayal."⁷⁷ Chen Boda's words aimed more at undermining the position of senior party leaders who had become the targets of the movement than at offering a critical analysis of social relations in socialist China. Although he called for the Red Guards to abandon their sectarian preoccupation with the bloodline, he nevertheless emphasized that "it is very wrong not to stress class status and class origin," and that "Chairman Mao and our Party have always laid great stress on one's class status and origin."⁷⁸

The Maoist leadership's criticism of the bloodline theory provided grassroots activists with an opportunity to voice their opposition. The publication and dissemination of Yu Luoke's famous essay "On Class Origins" marked a significant moment of political emergence from the mass

movement. The continuing ambiguities circulating amid official discourse and manifested through the words of Maoist leaders led some young people to search for an alternative understanding of class through their everyday experiences and from rapidly unfolding events. New forms of political understanding emerged that offered critical analyses of class relations in Chinese socialism, Yu Luoke's ideas exemplified the divergent political understandings of the meaning, direction, and targets of the Cultural Revolution.

Yu Luoke was a twenty-four-year-old factory apprentice when the Cultural Revolution broke out. The history of the Yu family illustrates the immense fluidity and complexity of class relations characteristic of modern Chinese society. Yu's great-grandfather migrated from Shandong to Manchuria because of extreme poverty. Over the course of several decades, the family managed to become quite affluent, owning a dozen shops. However, a disaster wiped out its entire fortune. By the time Yu's father was growing up, the family had become completely impoverished, and he had to start working at the age of fifteen for the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway Company. Because of his diligence, Yu's father won a scholarship to study at Waseda University, one of the most prestigious and progressive universities in Japan. Returning to China when the Sino-Japanese War broke out, Yu's father worked as a civil engineer at a government office, where he met Yu's mother, an office typist. In 1948, less than one year before the Communist victory, the couple bought a metal workshop that employed about ten workers. As a result, the family was classified as capitalist in the early 1950s despite the fact that the workshop had been handed over to the state and both parents worked as salaried state employees (see Figure 3).

The urban bourgeoisie received relatively lenient treatment after 1949, but their situation deteriorated rapidly from the late 1950s. For the Yu family, this was compounded by the fact that both parents were branded as rightists in 1957. As a result, Yu's father was sent to a labor camp and was not allowed to return to Beijing until 1964, with neither employment nor residence permit or *hukou*. Yu's mother, while being allowed to keep her job, was removed from her position and placed under mass supervision.⁷⁹ As a result of his tainted family background, Yu suffered discrimination as a teenager. The double stigma of being from a capitalist and rightist family doomed his chance of joining the Youth League, a political requirement for many desirable jobs. Although Yu excelled academically, he always received Bs for his "moral and behavior grade" (*caoxing chengji*) because of his family background. After 1957, Yu's moral grade was lowered to C, evidently to reflect his parents' newly branded rightist status. The teacher was quoted as saying, "Students from bad-class families are just like gongs

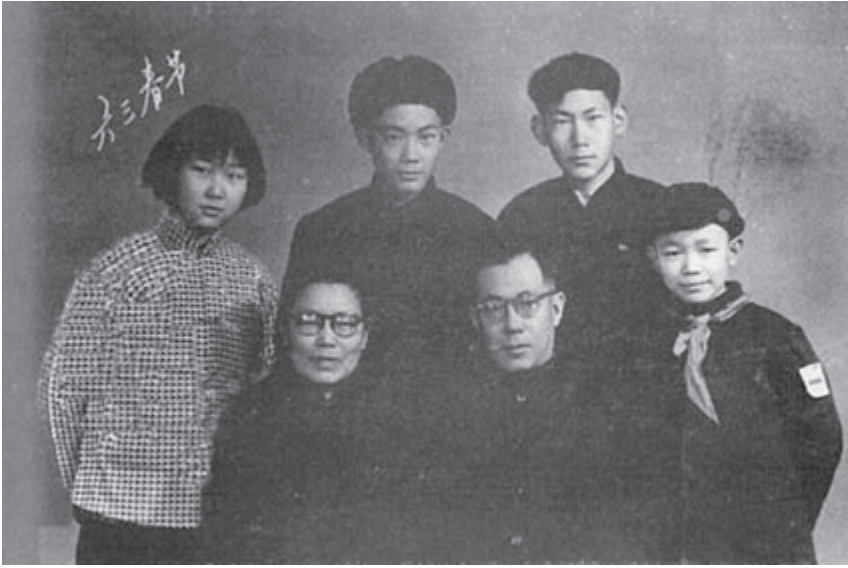


Figure 3. The Yu family, 1963
 Front row (left to right): mother, father, Yu Luomian (younger brother)
 Back row (left to right): Yu Luojin (younger sister), Yu Luowen (younger brother),
 Yu Luoke. The Chinese characters above Yu Luojin mean “Spring Festival, 1963.”
 Courtesy of Yu Luowen.

that have cracked. However hard you hit them, they will never produce the right sound.”⁸⁰ The C grade, which presumably reflected young Luoke’s political behavior and moral character, stuck with him until his graduation. His younger sister Luojin, still in primary school, suffered the same indignity of having her moral grades abruptly lowered from straight As to Cs, and her moral evaluation admonished her to “draw a clear line from the family.”⁸¹

Upon graduating from middle school in 1959, the seventeen-year-old Yu performed very well in the college entrance examination. Despite his performance, he was denied college admission, even to vocational schools.⁸² A second attempt in 1960 failed for the same reason of family class background. Under great pressure to seek any employment possible to contribute to the family finances, Yu, like many other urban middle-school graduates who were unable either to continue education or to find employment, went to work on a rural farm near Beijing. During his years of working at the farm, Yu read widely in history, literature, and philosophy and became especially preoccupied with philosophers such as Kant, Rousseau, and Hegel, taking copious notes and meticulously recording his thoughts in a dozen volumes of diaries. He also wrote essays, film reviews, and poems

and sent them to newspapers and magazines. Most of his submissions, however, were turned down.

Yu tried the college examination for the third time in 1962. He did very well but was again denied admission. Out of frustration and exhaustion, Yu returned home to Beijing in 1964. After a number of temporary jobs (substitute teacher, telephone-booth attendant, and library assistant), in 1965 he was fortunate to find work as an apprentice at a machinery factory, earning less than half the salary of regular young workers. He later vividly described this experience in his famous essay "On Class Origins." Family background became one of the most important factors for employment prospects, wrote Yu: "There was an entry for family background on the application forms for unemployed youth. . . . Most young applicants were more or less the same in their personal history. However, every employer would pick only the ones with good family backgrounds."⁸³

Yu Luoke appeared to harbor no rebellious intent during these years. He may have been angry with the system that rejected him, but he continued to work hard quietly. But life changed dramatically in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution broke out. During the summer of 1966, Yu witnessed the wanton violence justified in the name of revolution and class war. Yu's mother became the first in the family to be detained and abused, together with other black monsters at her workplace. For fear of political trouble, Yu Luoke burned most of his diary, manuscripts, and correspondence, like many urban families that destroyed numerous old books, traditional artworks, and family genealogies. The Yu family's apartment was repeatedly raided and ransacked. The family sent his grandmother to the house of his second aunt (*eryi*) in order to shield her from the turmoil as the latter's household belonged to the category of urban poor and was deemed safe. Within days, however, the old lady had to return home. Second Uncle was exposed as a historical counterrevolutionary when it was discovered that he had served briefly as a traffic cop under the Kuomintang (KMT). The family's class status was immediately reclassified, and its fortunes turned upside down. Second Uncle was dismissed from his job, the house was raided, and Second Aunt was ordered to pin a piece of black cloth on her clothes with the characters "family member of a counterrevolutionary" prominently displayed. Terribly humiliated, she killed herself by taking an overdose of sleeping pills. The family worried that the grandmother might break down at the loss of her favorite daughter, but she took it remarkably well, calmly observing that it would be better to die than to have to bear the pain of suffering humiliation every day.⁸⁴

Yu was briefly detained and subjected to interrogations at his factory, partly because of his family background. Although "On Class Origins"

was not published until January 1967, Yu began writing it as early as late August 1966. “This week I have been working hard on the article on family origins,” Yu wrote in a diary entry dated August 21; “its title has been changed to ‘Some Brief Discussions of Issues Relating to the Family Origins.’ In the last few days I have stopped because even Mao has put on the Red Guards’ armband. So it would not be good to say things critical of the Red Guards.”⁸⁵ After his release from detention in late September, Yu composed several drafts of the essay. In October, his younger brothers Yu Luowen and Yu Luomian took part in the surging wave of the Great Link-up (*chuanlian*).⁸⁶ During the earlier weeks, travel by students from stigmatized family backgrounds had often been banned, but by early October enforcement had become lax. Schools in Beijing had become deserted because most red students had taken off. Luowen and Luomian managed to obtain approval from their school’s Cultural Revolution committee, which nevertheless stated that they came from a bad family background and must remain under close supervision. During October and November, Luowen and Luomian traveled to Wuhan, Changsha, Guilin, and Kunming and finally reached Guangzhou, where they composed an essay criticizing the bloodline theory based on Luoke’s arguments under the pseudonym “Beijing Call-to-Arms Battle Team.” They mimeographed several hundred copies and posted them in Guangzhou’s downtown streets. According to Luowen, “After the essay was posted, the reactions were absolutely phenomenal. At each spot where we posted it, numerous people read, copied, and debated the essay. Written all over every poster were comments such as ‘Great!’, ‘Fantastic!’, or ‘Poisonous weed!’” Excited by the responses, they mimeographed some copies of Luoke’s “On Class Origins” and posted them in the streets, too. Before long, the essay had been spotted as far away as Wuhan and Tianjin.⁸⁷

After Luowen and Luomian returned to Beijing in late November, the three Yu brothers printed a few hundred copies of Luoke’s “On Class Origins” and posted them in the streets near Beijing and Tsinghua Universities, as well as the municipal party quarters. This attracted a dozen like-minded students, such as Mu Zhijing and Wang Jianfu of the Beijing No. 4 Middle School. Mu recollected, “I first read the mimeographed ‘On Class Origins’ on a utility pole. I admired it greatly. My own opposition to the bloodline couplet derived mostly from my intuitive disgust and righteous indignation but did not really rise to the level of theory. The author of ‘On Class Origins,’ however, discussed the issues in a theoretically sophisticated way. The article was rigorous, refreshing, and inspiring.”⁸⁸ Using the contact information on the poster, Mu was able to find Yu Luowen, Yu Luoke’s younger brother, who disclosed only that the article had been au-

thored by a certain “Small Group” (*xiaozu*). Together, they decided to print more copies of the essay and disseminate it to a wider audience. Believing that the harsh tone of the essay might “weaken the objectivity of the arguments” and “lead the readers to cast doubt about the personal stake of its authors,” Mu made changes to the tone of the essay while preserving its structure and arguments. Upon reading the revised version, according to Mu’s account, Luowen “flung out of the room white with anger.” However, he returned the next day and apologized, claiming that the “Small Group” appreciated the revisions. Using money borrowed from his school, Mu purchased 7,500 sheets of printing paper, and a PLA printing house took the job. After typesetting, however, the printer found that there was still extra space on the page and asked Mu what to do. Mu ingeniously decided to produce a newspaper by inserting a masthead and adding a few more essays, using the fictitious “Capital Middle-School Student Revolutionary Rebellion Headquarters” as the publisher. On January 18, 1967, the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* appeared, with the revised version of Yu Luoke’s “On Class Origins” published under the pseudonym “Beijing Research Group on the Problem of Class Origins.”⁸⁹

The publication of “On Class Origins” was an instant success. Over 30,000 copies of the inaugural issue of the paper were sold within a week. It was reprinted three times. Even a black market appeared, and copies of the issue carrying Yu’s essay were sold at as much as one hundred times its face value.⁹⁰ Reportedly over a million copies of the essay were reprinted nationwide, setting off a heated debate among students and ordinary citizens over the meaning of class. In Beijing, at least twenty Red Guard newspapers were involved in the debate, either supporting or opposing Yu’s arguments.

“On Class Origins” and the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* were quickly brought to the attention of the national leadership. Chen Boda learned about Yu’s essay at a meeting with Beijing students in February 1967. Chen remarked at the meeting that sons were not necessarily good even if their parents were good, and revolutionary leaders might not all come from families of good class. When he was asked about Yu’s essay, he replied that it was good that the piece had stimulated discussions, and that this would “heighten people’s political consciousness and sharpen their discriminating faculties.”⁹¹ On another occasion, a man approached Mu Zhijing to request a whole set of the paper, claiming that the CCRG would assemble eight most influential Red Guard papers for Mao to peruse. It was also reported that the CCP Politburo reprinted Yu’s essay in large-size font for its members. From its inception, the paper and its editors were regularly

called on by two mysterious figures claiming to work for *Red Flag*, the mouthpiece of the CCRG. After the appearance of the third issue of the paper in mid-February 1967, they approached Mu and solemnly warned him that the “general direction [of the paper] is wrong,” and they must “rein in the horse on the edge of the cliff” (*xuanya lema*), disclosing that the message was in fact from Guan Feng, a key CCRG member.⁹²

Although the Maoist leadership took a guarded interest, readers’ responses to the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* were enthusiastic. According to Mu Zhijing, “I was preoccupied with the editorial work and didn’t have time for selling the papers. One day I went with the sales team. We were so tightly surrounded that not a drop of water could have trickled through. Numerous hands reached out to us, stuffing small bills in my hand. As soon as I handed out a copy, it was grabbed by someone right away, even before I was able to make the change. Before I knew it, all the copies were gone.”⁹³ Letters of support poured in from every corner of the country. Their volume was so large that the mailmen refused to deliver, and mail had to be picked up daily in a three-wheeled cart (*sanlunche*) by the paper’s staff. In the early weeks of 1967, over twenty students joined the paper’s operation, including several dedicated members from cadre families who had recently joined the ranks of social outcasts or bastards after their parents fell from grace. Yu Luoke’s identity, however, was kept a secret because of concern that his bourgeois and rightist family background might jeopardize the paper. Mu Zhijing did not discover the real identity of the fictitious small group until February 1967, and others did not find out until much later. In fact, upon learning about the family background of the author of “On Class Origins,” some members did choose to withdraw from the group.⁹⁴

Rights and Class: Transgressing Maoism

What made “On Class Origins” so popular? What was the significance of Yu Luoke’s writings? Yu and his comrades’ ideas spearheaded what was to become a reinterpretation of the Cultural Revolution and an incipient critique of China’s state-socialist order. Protesting discrimination based on bureaucratically constructed class categories, Yu raised several important questions. First, in post-1949 Chinese society, who discriminated, and who was discriminated against? Second, could the party’s class policy and the bloodline theory put forward in its name be justified? And third, are all people entitled to equal political rights, regardless of their class origins?

Yu's celebrated essay opens with an assessment of the breadth of the problem: "The issue of family background has been a long-standing, serious social problem. It affects many areas of social life. If landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists represent only 5 percent of the country's total population, then the number of their children and close relatives will be many times higher (this does not even include the children of capitalists, individuals with dubious political history, and intellectuals, much less children of ordinary office workers, rich middle peasants, and middle peasants)." ⁹⁵ Although advocates of the bloodline theory claimed that offspring of red categories had been discriminated against, Yu pointed out that it was, to the contrary, the privileged born-reds who had received favorable treatment, and people from tainted class backgrounds had been deprived of their rights. Yu rejected the idea that youth from red households were politically superior. In an article titled "On the Chasm," he argued that the bloodline theory had created an "artificial chasm" among the people. ⁹⁶ Holding the party's class policy responsible, Yu compared the system of class status to a repressive caste system: "If things continue on like this, what would be the difference between those with bad class backgrounds and those living in caste systems such as the blacks in America, untouchables in India, and Burakumin in Japan?" ⁹⁷ All young people, regardless of their family backgrounds, wrote Yu, "should be entitled to equal political treatment." Such equality should not be based on instrumental considerations but should be considered "a matter of principle." ⁹⁸ Protesting discrimination, such critical views embodied an egalitarian conception of citizenship welcomed by many across the country. The central idea of "On Class Origins," as a student from Heilongjiang wrote in a letter to the editor, was that "all revolutionary young people descending from diverse class origins should be treated equally during the era of Mao Zedong." ⁹⁹

Yu Luoke's views were disputed by many others active in the rebel movement, who thought that such criticism of the party's class policy went too far. Reactions included charges that the views expressed in "On Class Origins" amounted to calling for the "abolition of class struggle." One rebuttal claimed that Yu's essay deployed "sophistry and sweet-sounding rhetoric . . . to point its spearhead at the proletarian state, the gallant PLA, and veteran revolutionary leaders" and had "a baneful influence on those who descended from bad-class families." ¹⁰⁰ Others argued that family and societal influences were inseparable, and that "On Class Origins" wrongly denied the importance of the former. Yu's article should be "sentenced to death," demanded one rebuttal, because it poisoned the minds of children from bourgeois families as much as the bloodline theory harmed children

of workers, peasants, and cadres.¹⁰¹ Other reactions, while sympathetic to Yu's views, reaffirmed the official formula, stressing that class origin and political behavior were in fact closely related.¹⁰² It is noteworthy that the identity of the author of "On Class Origins" remained a mystery to many. Rumors spread that the real author was not a disgruntled middle-school student, but "a fifth-year college student," "a crafty and sinister bastard, one who had repeated for two years. His family background is predictable: his parents—as well as brothers and sisters—all have problems. His political behaviors are abominable. And according to his classmates, 'If anyone is to be labeled as a rightist, he should be the first one in the whole school.'" ¹⁰³

In response to criticisms, Yu asked rhetorically whether class origin could be found in Mao's well-publicized "criteria for revolutionary successors," or whether the model hero Wang Jie—born to a middle peasant family—was inferior to Lei Feng, a poor peasant orphan.¹⁰⁴ He argued that the fallacy of the bloodline theory was that it "recognizes only the role of the father and places it above anything else."¹⁰⁵ Although its advocates did not completely deny the efficacy of Mao's Thought in educating the bourgeoisie and their offspring, they insisted that family influence was far more important. Yu argued that social influence was heterogeneous and complex: "Discussions with friends, leaders' instructions, messages from newspapers, books, and literary and artistic works, exposure to customs and mores, and influence from work will all leave indelible influences, . . . and family influence often cannot compete with them."¹⁰⁶ Yu contended that family background was too simplistic a substitute for class analysis given that class position and political subjectivity were conditioned by a multiplicity of social factors. For Yu, the logic of the bloodline theory was mechanistic. "It is very easy to ascertain one's family origin. Just open one's dossier, the problem is solved, and all is done. Alternatively, when meeting someone in the street, just ask, 'What's your family background?'—and that is it, simple and clear." He derided the bloodline theory with a fictitious exchange between two students:

Student A: "What is your family background?"

Student B: "How about you?"

Student A: "I belong to the Five Red Categories. My father is a worker."

Student B: "In that case I am superior to you. I am a worker!"¹⁰⁷

Yu's emphasis was on the open-endedness of social relations. He argued that instead of being reducible to a fixable essence through bureaucratically constructed categories, such as the class status of one's father, class positions and identities were vastly more complex. The influence of parents, the linchpin of the bloodline theory, was mediated by a variety of

concrete circumstances and forces. A revolutionary father did not necessarily result in good influence, and “if both parents are [revolutionary] heroes, their children can still receive bad influence and become problematic, or much worse. By the same token, a father with problems does not necessarily exert negative influence, as was the case with Lenin.”¹⁰⁸ Yu argued for breaking up the reductionist logic of the bloodline theory, which posited an unmediated relationship between family background and class politics. Given that family background and its influence formed only a small part of the dense web of social relations that conditioned one’s views and behavior, Yu wrote, “it is not hard to reach the conclusion that family background and political conduct are only minimally correlated.”¹⁰⁹ Even the seemingly simple matter of family background might not be so simple at all, because members of the same family might come from different backgrounds and might occupy different class statuses according to the same classificatory schema. Family background, family influence, social influence, and political behavior were thus like “several links in a chain”: “Heating up one end does not necessarily mean heating up the other end too.”¹¹⁰ Using the examples of Lenin and Mao, who were from landlord and rich peasant families respectively, Yu remarked sarcastically that “a father cannot make up a family,”¹¹¹ nor, we may add, can he define class.

In discussing the importance of social influence, critics of the bloodline theory stressed the malleability of humans and the importance of ideology in producing political subjectivity. One notion that Yu frequently invoked was that of *biaoxian*, variously translated as political behavior, performance, or conduct. In addition to his stress on the efficacy of the social, Yu accorded great importance to personal initiative and political consciousness, or what is usually understood in Chinese political discourse as “internal causes” (*neiyin*). “Human beings are capable of choosing their own directions,” Yu wrote, and an overemphasis on family background was “a reflection of the kind of mechanistic thinking that characteristically denies an individual’s subjective initiatives.”¹¹²

It is notable that the stress on subjective initiative, as represented by the well-known concept of *biaoxian*, has received much scholarly attention as what distinguishes Maoism from orthodox Marxism. Mao, argued Maurice Meisner, developed a conception of class “determined not so much by such reasonably objective factors as economic status or political position but rather by more subjective factors: the evaluation of one’s ideological proclivities, level of ‘political consciousness,’ and political activities.”¹¹³ This notion, argued Richard Kraus, shifted away from an exclusive attention to stagnant class categories, representing “an effort to liberate ‘class’ from the narrow confines of a social stratification which at best offered a

pale image derived from a class struggle which no longer existed.”¹¹⁴ Kraus further argued that the Maoist emphasis on conduct, in making possible the continual fashioning of new categories applicable to behaviors supposedly representing classes hostile to socialism, was able to “encompass both the old inequalities of the pre-liberation cleavage and the new ones associated with socialist institutions.”¹¹⁵ Although these class-like categories included arbitrarily manufactured political labels, the same practice also made it possible to criticize party cadres because the targets of class struggle could include cadres for their exhibition of bourgeois-like attitudes and behaviors. This would also allow those without power to attack the power holders because children of former bourgeoisie could lay claim to proletarian consciousness obtained through the study of Mao Zedong Thought.

Here I would like to push the analysis a step further. There is little doubt that Yu’s stress on what may be called the voluntaristic aspect of class closely resembled key aspects of Maoism. What is of special interest, however, is how familiar concepts can take on new meanings when they pass from one practical context to another. Although Yu employed familiar vocabulary and rhetoric of the official discourse, his critique nevertheless reached the limit of the official discourse and entered dangerous terrain in which slight displacements might lead to radically transformative results.

One crucial significance of Yu Luoke’s stress on *biaoxian* concerns how new forms of political subjectivity were construed through such a familiar notion. Yu argued that conduct should be the only meaningful measure to determine one’s position in society. “Every young person is equal before conduct,” he wrote; “young people with bad family backgrounds do not need acceptance bestowed on them as a favor or pity and should not settle for being merely on the margin. The question of who is the backbone of the revolution cannot be answered by who gave birth to you.”¹¹⁶ Through *biaoxian*, a system of equivalence was established among different sectors of society divided by the class-status system. In this discourse, the notion of *biaoxian* destabilized a social system structured in accordance with fixed essences and became the medium through which the marginalized and excluded elements could be reincorporated into the social body. In a closed political space in which every class position was fixed as a specific and irreplaceable moment, the stress on *biaoxian*—or on the agentive aspect of social relations—served to dissolve the internal frontiers and redraw the social topography in ways that made it possible for new forms of collective solidarity to emerge. From the incorporation of the marginalized, a more inclusive political identity emerged around which popular struggles could be organized. Signified as the “revolutionary masses” or the “revolutionary

youth,” this more expansive form of political identity mobilized the fragmented and hierarchized people into a unified subject.

What is particularly interesting is how such subversion of internal frontiers within the people allowed for the identification of a new, external frontier—that is, the boundary between the people and the privileged stratum—and thus for new points of social antagonism to be disclosed. Yu Luoke argued that the formation of an outcast class excluded from Chinese society was part and parcel of the process through which a privileged stratum was produced. The social body was arbitrarily divided into strata with distinct privileges and rights, or lack thereof. To equate family background and class in accordance with the bloodline theory, wrote Yu, meant that “if the father is a landlord, the son is a young landlord; if the father is a high-ranking official, then the son is a junior high-ranking official [*xiao gaogan*].”¹¹⁷ The formation of the privileged stratum and the production of black bastards were thus two sides of the same coin. The bloodline theory, argued Yu, “attempts to create a new privileged stratum under the guise of socialism, while creating a reactionary caste system and a new system of oppression among the people.”¹¹⁸ This emergent opposition between the reunified popular subject and the privileged stratum had profound political significance in the context of the Cultural Revolution. With the remapping of the social body into the people vis-à-vis the power holders, the battle to eliminate discrimination and the struggle to emancipate the social outcasts became associated with abolishing privileges and unequal political power. The struggle for equal citizenship rights then took on a class significance and became part of a more general struggle to radically transform social and political relationships.

From a critique of the social conditions that produced an outcast class, Yu Luoke moved on to an analysis of the system of inequalities that produced a dominant elite. Here lies, I argue, the most subversive significance of his criticism of the bloodline theory. In an essay published in March 1967, Yu raised an unsettling question: “In accordance with the natural laws of biology, the previous or current generation is getting old. . . . Who will then be the targets of class struggle for the next generation?”¹¹⁹ For advocates of the bloodline theory, the answer was easy: when the older generations died out, their offspring would replace them as the main targets of the continuous revolution. For Yu, this was totally mistaken. In this regard, Yu’s attempt to reinterpret the Cultural Revolution is of cardinal importance. In another essay penned in early 1967, Yu argued that the targets of the revolution “were never fixed or unchanging.” He then asked: “What is the intense contradiction concerning this specific stage of the Cultural Revolution? Is it the contradiction between the KMT reactionaries and the

masses, as was the case during the period of China's revolutionary civil war? Is it the contradiction between the landlord and proletarian classes during the land reform? Is it the contradiction between the bourgeois rightists and the broad masses during the Anti-Rightist Campaign? Or is it the contradiction between the national-capitalist class and the working class?" Yu's answer was decidedly negative: "No, it is none of these." The Cultural Revolution, he argued, "has its own specific major [class] contradictions."¹²⁰ The novelty of class contradictions in a socialist society was that "a new aristocratic stratum" had been or was in the process of being formed. The bloodline theory helped legitimate the privileged stratum. The "restoration of capitalism" therefore did not mean that "Chiang Kai-shek will come back or the former capitalists will be back in managerial positions. Restoration does not mean supporting all the political mummies. Khrushchev's restoration did not help Tsar Nicholas regain his power. . . . Likewise, those who have seized power have no plan to invite Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship back or let the former exploiters issue orders. Aren't there already enough new bourgeois elements?"¹²¹

What is the significance of the critique spearheaded by Yu and his comrades? In an important study of Red Guard politics, Joel Andreas cited Yu Luoke's remark on *biaoxian* and argued that although the political forces sympathetic to Yu's ideas challenged the party bureaucracies, they nevertheless aimed to defend meritocracy and cultural capital associated with the old intellectual elites.¹²² This interpretation, I suggest, can be broadened in two respects. First, it is crucial that we realize that Yu's use of the term *biaoxian* in the specific context of the Cultural Revolution referred not to academic or professional performance but rather to eminently political acts, such as mastering Mao's Thought or joining Red Guard groups. Second, focusing exclusively on the narrow, literal meaning of Yu's criticism of the bloodline theory, Andreas underestimates the symbolic—and thus the expansive—significance of this emergent critical discourse.

In contrast to interpretations that view Yu's ideas as representing merely the interests of particular social groups, I suggest that a different reading is possible. Yu's criticism of the bloodline theory indeed appealed directly to those marginalized by the class-status system. But this is not the whole story. In challenging the bloodline theory, the criticism developed by Yu and his comrades transcended the particular or particularistic demands of specific social groups. The demand for equal rights for the offspring of black categories was decidedly not, in the words of Ernesto Laclau, "a punctual demand, closed in itself," but rather "the tip of an iceberg or the symbol of a large variety of unformulated social demands."¹²³ What is crucial to understand is how such apparently particular demands might

obtain—in the specific context of the Cultural Revolution—a more general political significance, and how the particular and the general or universal dimensions coalesced to produce a dynamic and robust critique.

How should the universal dimension of this emergent critical discourse be understood, and what is the sociopolitical content of its universality? It is noteworthy that in contemporary Chinese intellectual and political discussions, Yu Luoke's writings frequently have been portrayed as the intellectual precursor of a Chinese liberalism that expresses the universal yearning for individual freedom and human rights. For example, Chen Kuide, a liberal dissident in exile, wrote:

Yu Luoke's central concerns were the nature of humanity and humanism, human rights, and equality and liberty. . . . In this sense, if we manage to remove the rhetoric of his essays, if we do away with the cloud of his obscure Marxist phraseology, we will have every reason as well as the full confidence to say that "On Class Origins" was China's Manifesto of Human Rights; it was the fresh, pure air of liberal thought seeping out from under a China scorched by red conflagrations raging throughout the vast land. Therefore, despite the absence of rigorous liberal scholarly language, Yu Luoke belonged unmistakably to China's liberal intellectual tradition that may be dated back to 1957 and to the years before 1949. He was indisputably its spiritual and intellectual descendant.¹²⁴

Despite attempts to claim an abstract, disembodied liberalism as Yu Luoke's legacy, I believe that a closer reading will disclose a more complex meaning. Most important, from the critique of the bloodline theory there emerged a new political analysis of Chinese socialism. Its subversive significance lay first and foremost in the redefinition of the social landscape of class. With its rejection of reified class categories and incorporation of the marginalized and excluded, it formulated a more expansive notion of political community, in which "the people" constituted a nodal point for new forms of collective identity. The specific forms of the democratic political subject that emerged, however, did not make the concept of class any less relevant. Rather, the popular imaginary was conjoined with an embedded understanding of class, thereby fashioning a powerful political language that transcended the dominant ideology.¹²⁵

It is from this perspective, I argue, that Yu and his peers' criticism of state-imposed discrimination should be understood. The meaning of the category "youth with bad class origins" was both literal and symbolic. Aside from its particular demands, the politics of mobilizing the black youth came to represent, in the specific context of the Cultural Revolution, a larger struggle against the privileged stratum. Yu himself seemed to be aware of such reciprocal relationships between the particular and the general. "A new

privileged stratum has been formed,” he wrote, “that is associated with the formation of a new stratum that is discriminated against.”¹²⁶ In this view, the particular and the general coalesced: the emancipation of the black youth—and the struggle for citizenship and human dignity—were part and parcel of the struggle to transform class relations in Chinese socialism. “Without emancipating those most oppressed youth with bad family backgrounds,” Yu wrote, “the Cultural Revolution will not achieve its victory.” The identity of the discriminated or black youth was thus transformed through symbolic reversal into the “most oppressed youth” and became emblematic, in rather condensed fashion, of the Chinese working people as a whole: “When reactionary forces are in power, the oppressed youth include not only those with bad family backgrounds, but also those youth from worker and peasant backgrounds, and other youth who have confronted the capitalist roaders in the party.”¹²⁷ The notion of the black youth thus served the function of the key symbol that, in the words of anthropologist Sherry Ortner, was both “summarizing” and “elaborating”—or, in the words of Ernesto Laclau, both “universalizing” and “particularizing.”¹²⁸ In the motion and exchange between the partial and the total, universal causes were associated with apparently particular demands and thereby transformed the ways in which the particular was defined. In short, Yu’s writings fashioned a new political language that subverted and potentially radicalized the Cultural Revolution’s official ideology. Existing vocabularies in the Chinese political discourse were injected with new meaning; and what appears to be only a liberal discourse of innate human rights took on the additional significance of forming a class-based critique.

Despite brief tolerance or even encouragement from the Maoist leadership, public discussions of the issue of class origins came to an abrupt halt. In April 1967, Yu’s essay “On Class Origins” was denounced as a “poisonous weed” at a meeting attended by top leaders, including Zhang Chunqiao, Xie Fuzhi, and Qi Benyu. According to Qi, a key CCRG member, Yu’s essay “is very, very wrong,” and its problem “lies in its negation of class analysis, its denial of the impact of class origins on people.” “It opposes our socialist system by arguing that there is a caste-like system in our country.”¹²⁹

Even before Qi Benyu’s denunciation, the situation for the *Journal* and its supporters had already become difficult. After publication of the sixth issue on April 1, it became clear that it was no longer possible to continue the operation in Beijing. Mu Zhijing traveled to Tianjin to seek a new printing house, only to learn that Qi’s speech had delivered the death sentence. Returning to Beijing, Mu immediately went to Yu Luoke’s residence. According to Mu’s recollection: “Luoke apologized to me, ‘You’re so young, but now you’re implicated in this mess because of me. I am so sorry.’ . . . Luoke

then asked about my thinking about the future of the paper. I said, 'I think there are only three choices: first, resist and continue to print the seventh issue; second, surrender by making self-criticism in the new issue; and third, cease publication—neither resist or concede mistakes.' 'Then which way do you plan to go?' 'The first road will be unrealistic, the second one will be against our conscience. I think the only possible way is the last one.' 'I totally agree with you.'" After discussion with Yu, Mu gathered members of the group and announced the decision to cease publication after only six issues.¹³⁰

Yu Luoke and his friends were placed under police surveillance. In a police report dated October 20, 1967, a certain Chief Liu was quoted as saying, "The case of Yu Luoke is a new type of case that has appeared in the Cultural Revolution," and Yu's writings were "an attempt to disorganize our revolutionary ranks, undermine Chairman Mao's headquarters, and organize a counterrevolutionary force to contest for the young people." The chief then stated, "The opportunity for resolving this case has now arrived."¹³¹ According to Yu's younger brother Luowen, rumors circulated that the author of "On Class Origins" might be arrested. In a letter to a friend, Luoke wrote: "Now I have only half of my freedom. I am often tailed, and my friends have been investigated by the police. My mail is being inspected." In another letter, he mocked the police: "This practice [of tailing] is both contemptible and yet infantile. Sometimes I abruptly turn around . . . just to shock the guy following me. I am merely a factory apprentice. If I am able to detect this, then how much damage these inexperienced policemen could cause to our country if they were handling much more serious cases involving security of the state!"¹³²

The order to arrest Yu Luoke was signed on January 1, 1968, reportedly by Xie Fuzhi, head of Beijing's Municipal Revolutionary Committee and China's minister of public security.¹³³ During his last days of freedom, Yu behaved as if everything were normal. On New Year's Day of 1968, he said to his mother, "Today I would like to shut the door and meditate on my faults [*bi men si guo*]. Please do not let anyone disturb me." Locking himself in his room for the whole day, he wrote about the past year and his plans for the future and made a reading list for the coming year that included 104 books. On January 5, Yu Luoke left for work as usual, but he never returned. Upon his arrest, an address book containing nearly one thousand addresses of corresponding readers around the country was seized by the police, who had suspected that Yu was trying to "organize a political party." Many were arrested, and some received long prison sentences. Also seized was the manuscript of a long essay that Yu was working on, titled "On Wages," in which he discussed issues relating to income distribution and

economic production in a socialist society.¹³⁴ During the twenty-six months he spent in prison, Yu Luohe was repeatedly pressured to confess that he had committed serious crimes, but he adamantly refused. The presentence circular soliciting mass discussions of the proposed death penalty highlighted Yu's capitalist family background and his parents' status as rightist and counter-revolutionary, thereby embodying the very logic of the bloodline theory that Yu rejected. It outlined Yu's crimes as follows: "Yu harbors a deep-seated hatred of our party and the socialist system, and his thinking is reactionary through and through. Since 1963, he has dispersed a large amount of reactionary remarks and produced tens of thousands of words of reactionary letters, poems, and diary, viciously denigrating the proletarian headquarters. In the Cultural Revolution, he has authored a dozen reactionary articles and disseminated them in order to stir up a counterrevolutionary public opinion. He has also recruited a dozen counterrevolutionaries as well as bad elements in both Beijing and elsewhere in the country, conspiring to commit assassinations and to subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹³⁵ On March 5, 1970, Yu Luohe was sentenced to death as an "active counterrevolutionary" (*xianxing fan'geming*) by the PLA Beijing Municipal Military Control Commission and was summarily executed before a crowd of over 100,000.¹³⁶

IN THIS CHAPTER, I have offered an account of the reifying conceptions and practice of class as manifested in the class-status system of social exclusion. The treatment of children of former bourgeoisie and landlords as bourgeoisie and landlords lay at the heart of the class-status system and, by extension, the bloodline theory. Whether this tendency for class to degenerate into caste was characteristic of late Maoism may be subject to debate. Richard Kraus, for example, has written, "From a Maoist perspective, the turning of class into caste was unwelcome. Mao's interest in restoring class as a dynamic conception was at odds with an approach to class which emphasized static patterns of inherited social honor."¹³⁷ However, Mao's ambiguity on these crucial issues has also been recognized, even by Kraus himself: "Although the distance separating socialist cadres from socialist citizens was the most troubling to Mao, he also took seriously the continuing threat posed by members of the formerly propertied classes, even though the legal foundation of their power had been undermined by socialist transformation. Since two structurally distinct kinds of social interrelationships were simultaneously identified as 'class,' many Chinese could respond one-sidedly to Mao's call for class struggle, focusing upon the old system of class designations, which . . . could be only frozen markers of social status."¹³⁸

In liberating the emancipatory political moment from state-imposed categories, the ideas developed by Yu Luohe and his comrades transgressed

and transcended the dominant Maoist ideology. They pioneered a new, critical analysis of class relations and processes in Chinese socialism, one that was to find continuing expression in the efforts of politically inquisitive young people to reflect on the meaning of the Cultural Revolution. After the close of the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution*, a number of Yu's sympathizers joined the newly formed April 3 Faction (Si San Pai), a loose network of student groups from several dozen middle schools in Beijing. The April 3 Faction was formed by students who opposed the tightening PLA control of the Red Guard movement that began in the political breakdown in the wake of the January Revolution. In the spring of 1967, there was an increasing tendency toward the merger and dissolution of independent student organizations as part of the process toward establishing political unity and restoring authority in schools (see Chapter 4). In this new circumstance, Yu's ideas inspired the recalcitrant students. Some members of the April 3 Faction seized on a remark made by Jiang Qing that Mao had intended a "redistribution of property and power" through the Cultural Revolution,¹³⁹ reinterpreting it in ways remarkably similar to Yu Luoke's ideas. In an essay titled "On the New Trends of Thought" published in the group's paper, it was argued that although China's socialist revolution had abolished exploitation based on private ownership, economic property and political power were nevertheless concentrated in the hands of bureaucratic power holders who in theory served as the trustees of the social property they controlled. These power holders, in the view of these critics, formed a privileged class that would transfer the privileges to their offspring. The conflict between the laboring people and this new ruling elite who were originally veteran revolutionaries constituted the main class antagonism in Chinese society. The goal of the Cultural Revolution therefore was to redistribute property and power and to destroy the foundation of the new privileged class.¹⁴⁰

I have argued in this chapter that from the critique of the bloodline theory there emerged a new political analysis of Chinese socialism, a new critique that had the potential to fracture and redefine the structure of meanings from which the Cultural Revolution derived its ferocious force. In protesting discrimination and rejecting reified class categories, the broad humanistic aspirations of Yu Luoke and his comrades were distinguished by placing human dignity and possibilities at the very heart of the socialist project. Critics elsewhere in China would later expand this incipient current into more systematic critiques of social and political inequalities in Chinese society, which I will examine in Chapter 5. Yu's writings played a pivotal role in this transformative process, preparing the ground for the development of a more potent and articulate critique. In this context, Maoist leaders' denunciation

of the essay “On Class Origins” should not be a surprise. The termination of the debate, as well as the arrest and later execution of Yu Luoke, signified the inherent limits of the Maoist ideology and politics of class. Notably, the suppression of the popular debate over the bloodline theory coincided with the national political trend toward rebuilding the party and state authorities. Chapter 4 will examine the vicissitudes of the Cultural Revolution’s shift of course by way of a focus on one of the most crucial events of the Cultural Revolution, Shanghai’s January Revolution in early 1967, in which instances of transgression, incorporation, and containment were inexorably intertwined.

REVOLUTIONARY ALCHEMY

*Economism and the Making of Shanghai's
January Revolution*

ALTERNATIVELY called the January Storm or the January Power Seizure, the January Revolution was one of the most critical events of the Cultural Revolution. The collapse of the party apparatus in Shanghai under intense rebel assaults in early 1967 has been widely regarded as a critical turning point catalyzing the fall of party authorities nationwide. The broad outline of the Shanghai episode seems familiar. The following account offered in a volume edited by several experts on the Cultural Revolution is typical: “[The January Revolution] refers to a series of activities carried out by the self-claimed revolutionary rebels in Shanghai . . . supported and virtually controlled by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, to take over power from the CCP municipal committee and the city government in January 1967. . . . And largely due to Mao Zedong’s enthusiastic support for rebels’ taking over . . . Shanghai became a revolutionary model in a nationwide power seizure campaign.”¹ Another account, offered in a widely read book by Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, states: “Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan took over the de facto authority of the Shanghai government, an event known as the January Storm. Mao publicly supported this kind of power seizure, and the January Storm style of power seizure was given nationwide publicity, leading to similar action on all levels elsewhere.”²

The importance of the January Revolution in Shanghai concerns the understanding of the course and dynamics of the Cultural Revolution as a whole. Significant differences notwithstanding, existing views of the January

Revolution have in fact mirrored one another in significant ways. The twin motifs constitutive of this broad interpretive consensus have been movement radicalization and the key role played by Mao and his close associates. Hong Yung Lee has succinctly articulated this view in his seminal study of the Cultural Revolution: “Undoubtedly, the January Power Seizure was a unique event not only in Chinese political history but also in the history of mankind, for in this period a so-called totalitarian regime governing a quarter of the world’s population ordered its people to seize power from itself for the sake of revolution.”³ According to Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, the “road map” of the Cultural Revolution for 1967—“the unfolding of nationwide all-round civil war”—had already been laid down by Mao in late 1966. Crucial to this was “the seizure of power by radical elements . . . facilitated by the Chairman’s fiat.”⁴ And for Harry Harding, the events in Shanghai marked the “radicalization of the goals of the Cultural Revolution.” Mao “authorize[d] radical groups to push aside the discredited (or recalcitrant) party committees and constitute new organs of political power in their place.” Shanghai, in this case, “was the forerunner in this stage of the Cultural Revolution.”⁵

This chapter reexamines the events in Shanghai in early 1967. How did the January Revolution take place? How should it be situated? What was the significance of the episode in both local and national contexts? Here it is crucial to explore more fully the internal temporality of events, which are never instantaneous happenings. The chapter starts with a discussion of economism or *jingji zhuyi*, a subject well known to Cultural Revolution scholars, but one whose significance has often been misrecognized or underappreciated. By focusing on economism, a disparaging term in Mao-era political language referring to workers’ demands for socioeconomic justice, the chapter further extends and modifies an alternative view of the Shanghai case as political demobilization or deradicalization, a rather minority interpretation that existing Cultural Revolution scholarship has largely neglected.⁶ Focusing on the marginal networks of action and meaning and their constitutive role in shaping the course of events, I argue that the Shanghai episode was considerably more complex than what has been portrayed in the existing interpretations. Based on both existing and newly available materials, including key participants’ memoirs, Red Guard publications, and local archival sources, this chapter explores an important aspect that has been largely ignored by both the conventional interpretations and their dissenters, namely, how local events were retroactively accorded a causality and coherence consistent with later versions of the larger historical narrative. Through this process, local experiences and initiatives in Shanghai, par-

tial and fragmented though they were, became ideologically transformed into a national political model. Instead of a simple moment of either widening popular mobilization or political deradicalization, I argue that the birth of such a model in fact constituted a fluid and contradictory moment in which both eruption and containment, and rebellion and order, were closely intertwined.

A Brief History of Economism

The mass phase of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai began in the late summer of 1966 when students spearheaded the Red Guard movement in response to Mao's call for rebellion. The movement rapidly escalated. By late October, Shanghai's party authorities at various levels had become the main targets of assaults. Rebel activism expanded from school to factory and from factory to factory. This process culminated in November with the rise of worker rebels and the establishment of the Workers' General Headquarters (WGHQ), a loose coalition led by Wang Hongwen, a People's Liberation Army (PLA) veteran and factory cadre who would later rise to national prominence as a member of the Gang of Four. The WGHQ received support from Maoist leaders at critical moments of its early life and came to be recognized by local party authorities as a revolutionary organization. This recognition—as well as the promise of political protection—legitimated the right of workers to organize, which in earlier months had been granted only to students.⁷

As the Cultural Revolution spread, it became clear that the Maoist leadership initially had considerably underestimated the extent of the disruption that mass movement would bring about. It was not merely that party bureaucracies came under siege; the growing mass mobilization also challenged one of the central aspects of the Cultural Revolution's prescribed framework, namely, the proper balance between rebellion and production and between revolution and economic order. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, industrial enterprises had been mostly immune to the turmoil. The Sixteen Points, the programmatic guideline of the Cultural Revolution, was vague about workers' participation in the movement. On the one hand, it stressed the need to establish "cultural revolution groups and congresses" in "factories, mines, other enterprises, urban districts and villages." On the other hand, it stated that "the aim of the Cultural Revolution is to revolutionize people's ideology and as a consequence to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in all fields of work,"

including economic production.⁸ According to a *People's Daily* editorial issued in November 1966, the party's policy of "grasping revolution and promoting production" (*zhua geming, cu shengchan*) "must be adhered to resolutely, with no exceptions, and at all times," and it was "absolutely imperative" that production not be impeded: "The national economy is an integral totality. . . . If any particular unit is affected, the system may be affected." "Therefore, the Cultural Revolution in the factories and communes must be conducted in spare time only. . . . In short, we must carry out the Cultural Revolution while at the same time making our production better, better, and even better!"⁹

The rise of worker rebels in Shanghai was a significant challenge to this formula. Beginning largely as a revolution from above, the Cultural Revolution found it much easier to detonate the mass of repressed energy than to control the scope of the explosion. From mid-November, popular pressure against the Shanghai party machine mounted steadily. Numerous Red Guard groups were organized by people from all walks of society, a phenomenon unprecedented in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The movement also gave expression to a myriad of antagonisms in Chinese society. In Shanghai, "economism" (*jingji zhuyi*) became the burning issue from late November to January. During the Cultural Revolution, the term referred to a disparate array of issues relating to widespread workers' demands for higher wages, shorter working hours, improved conditions of work, more secure employment status, and better health care and benefits. Originally associated with Lenin's critique of trade unionism, "economism" in Marxist terminology means the distraction of working-class activism from a more global political project to purely economic or economic demands.¹⁰ Not a familiar term in Chinese political discourse before the Cultural Revolution, economism was catapulted abruptly into the national political arena in the early weeks of 1967, particularly in Shanghai.

In many accounts of the Cultural Revolution, economism has been viewed as part of the machinations of the party apparatus to sabotage mass activities. For example, in the account of Maurice Meisner, "The old bureaucracy, in a desperate effort to save itself, expended the last of the financial resources of the city and its factories." What was later denounced as the "evil wind of economism," in Meisner's words, was "the last gasp of the old Shanghai party apparatus" to "bribe the workers into political passivity."¹¹ As several scholars have persuasively demonstrated, however, such views are only partially correct at best.¹² It was no doubt true that under growing mass pressure, local cadres at all levels were often only too happy to give in on economic issues if such capitulations could temporarily appease the workers and buy time for political maneuvering, lest they be accused of

suppressing rebellion.¹³ The local bureaucrats' willingness to make concessions notwithstanding, more intractable sources of socioeconomic discontent remained. The faltering bureaucracy and nervous bureaucrats had little control over the eruption of such grievances. In a crucial sense, the so-called "economistic wind" (*jingji zhuyi feng*) that swept over Shanghai was deeply rooted in the material life of the city's laboring population.

One issue that affected many workers was wage levels. According to official statistics, Shanghai workers' wage levels remained stagnant throughout the 1960s. Although the average real wage increased about 10 percent between 1952 and 1957, there was a sharp drop after 1958, and levels reached their lowest point in 1960. Despite a modest recovery in 1963–1964, there again was a drop on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, and the average wage in 1966 was approximately 5 percent lower than that of 1957, while at the same time the national cost-of-living index had increased by nearly 10 percent.¹⁴ Significantly, these changes occurred in the same period in which workers' productivity increased dramatically—by as much as 250 percent—and the city's total industrial output increased by 400 percent (see Table 3).¹⁵

Much of the discontent over wages, benefits, and work conditions had been long-standing but burst into full public view only during the Cultural Revolution. Such concerns dated back to the state-driven economic accumulation of the late 1950s. With frenzied optimism, the new state pursued the goal of strengthening national security in a hostile international environment. The relentless production drive was captured vividly by such slogans as "More, faster, better, and more economical results" and "Surpass Great Britain and catch up with America." Heavy long-term investment went forward at the expense of consumption, which had to be deferred in order to usher in a radiant future. When breakneck industrialization and labor intensification reached their apogee, semimilitary forms of labor organization were frequently used.¹⁶ Deterioration of labor conditions was aggravated by the fact that by the 1950s, China's trade unions—which nominally represented workers' interests—had lost their limited autonomy.¹⁷

Local archival sources provide a rich picture of worsening labor conditions during the late 1950s. Contrary to the officially enshrined image of selflessly dedicated workers, complaints were widespread. The list of grievances included increased regimentation of labor, exhaustive use of men and machines, and depressed wages and benefits. According to a report submitted by the Shanghai Union Air Conditioning Plant, exhausted workers complained that "the problem of overtime is so serious, and the union is not doing anything to stop it." The report revealed that "labor discipline is lax, and workers often come to work late, leave early, and take breaks

Table 3 Average monthly wage, cost-of-living index, productivity, and gross industrial output, 1952–1980

Year	Monthly wage of state-owned- enterprise workers (Shanghai, yuan/ person)	Cost-of-living index (national)	Productivity of workers (Shanghai, yuan/person)	Gross industrial output (Shanghai, millions of yuan)
1952	65.17	115.50	6,288	68.06
1953	69.36	121.40	7,577	93.16
1954	69.49	123.10	7,744	97.99
1955	66.79	123.50	7,457	95.24
1956	70.01	123.40	8,894	127.86
1957	71.55	126.60	8,577	134.15
1958	70.70	125.20	10,858	201.25
1959	67.80	125.60	13,709	291.90
1960	65.61	128.80	16,840	351.10
1961	66.52	149.60	10,947	215.02
1962	68.42	155.30	10,031	170.06
1963	69.99	146.10	11,580	192.04
1964	70.71	140.70	13,399	230.37
1965	69.58	139.00	16,003	285.30
1966	67.31	137.30	17,959	331.50
1967	67.24	136.40	15,740	299.47
1968	61.94	136.50	16,856	344.33
1969	62.21	137.80	18,587	403.85
1970	61.32	137.80	21,068	463.55
1971	61.50	137.70	22,503	448.21
1972	61.42	137.90	22,931	478.60
1973	60.73	138.00	24,391	521.04
1974	60.25	138.90	25,532	553.43
1975	58.27	139.50	25,913	583.09
1976	57.20	139.90	25,193	594.51
1977	56.05	143.70	26,562	646.01
1978	59.68	144.70	28,352	723.69
1979	67.68	147.40	29,849	784.24
1980	75.95	158.50	29,450	831.98

Sources: Shanghai tongjiju, *Shanghai tongji nianjian*: 1983 [Statistical yearbook of Shanghai: 1983] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), 80, 136, 329; Guojia tongjiju, *Zhongguo tongji nianjian*, 1983 [China statistical yearbook, 1983] (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1983), 455, 490.

early.”¹⁸ A confidential report compiled by the Municipal Bureau of Supervision confirmed the prevalent practice of excessive use of overtime. In an investigation of twenty factories, the report disclosed that managers often pressured workers to work for as long as twelve to eighteen hours or even twenty-four hours nonstop. Overtime was rationalized as “change of

shift” (*diaoban*) and often was initiated through interteam or interworkshop labor competition. Although the same report praised factory cadres’ “dedication to the task of fulfilling production goals,” it also acknowledged the concomitant problems of excessive labor intensification and lack of safety protection.¹⁹

The Great Leap Forward resulted in colossal waste of both natural and human resources. The years with the highest accumulation rate—the economic index that measures the division of national income between accumulation and consumption—were 1959 and 1960.²⁰ This period coincided with the collapse of the Chinese economy, resulting in hunger and malnutrition in the cities and widespread famine in the countryside.²¹ Shanghai’s economy suffered particularly acute difficulties: gross industrial output in 1962 declined over 50 percent from 1960.²² Over 600 state-sector enterprises (nearly 20 percent of the total number), many hastily established during the Great Leap, were shut down. Many workers lost their jobs. A wage freeze was put into effect that would remain in place until 1977, and an employment moratorium was also declared.²³

Although labor unrest was nothing new in the history of the PRC,²⁴ the eruption of workers’ grievances in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution was extraordinary, as they were largely unfettered by restraints imposed by the state. The workers, however, did not join the movement as a unified body. Despite the party’s attempt to project the image of a unified proletariat, Chinese workers were fragmented by bureaucratically constructed categories that organized the Chinese economic sectors and their associated inequalities, such as ownership type, industry, work organization, and location, among others.²⁵ In Shanghai, the sources of socioeconomic discontents were highly diverse, and the lines of demarcation were multiple: between workers employed in state enterprises and those in collective sectors, between senior and junior workers, between permanent and temporary workers, and so on. Young apprentices, for example, were among those most actively involved in rebellions. Factory apprenticeship usually involved a prolonged training period at depressed wages (often less than half the average wage) and with lower social and political status. The political cleavage between the rebel and conservative workers often emerged along the division between unskilled and apprentice workers, on the one hand, and skilled workers, on the other.

Shanghai’s rusticated youth, who had been relocated to rural areas to perform agricultural labor, constituted another highly active rebel force. This phenomenon was national, but the sense of dissatisfaction was particularly acute in Shanghai, which developed one of the most comprehensive rustication programs in the country. The total number of rusticates between 1957 and 1966 reached over 200,000.²⁶ The Cultural Revolution abruptly

interrupted the rustication program. Regular means of population control over residence and travel temporarily broke down. Many rusticates abandoned their rural posts and returned to Shanghai, often with the acquiescence or even encouragement of local officials eager to rid themselves of the troublemakers. Rusticates in many parts of China resorted to rebellion to voice their grievances, demanding jobs, urban *hukou*, and the right to organize. Even parents of rusticates formed organizations, complaining that their sons and daughters had been abused by rural cadres and petitioning that they should be allowed to return home.²⁷

One of the most important divisions in Shanghai was that between regular, permanent workers and the vast semiproletarian workforce consisting of temporary and contract workers. Although the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted an extravagant prolabor rhetoric that declared the working class “the master of the country,” the question of who would be eligible to join the ranks of the “workers” was not at all simple. One of the central components of the state-socialist strategy of national economic accumulation was a highly disciplined and continually flexible labor force. In the chaotic process of increasing production typical of the late 1950s, many enterprises vastly expanded their labor force by hiring temporary workers from the urban unemployed, as well as peasants in nearby villages. Lacking the elementary benefits enjoyed by regular workers, these workers tended to be assigned to the most backbreaking types of labor but received much lower wages. Christopher Howe has estimated that the number grew in the mid-1960s to 30–40 percent of the total nonagricultural labor force nationwide as a result of the state’s effort to cut wage and welfare expenditures.²⁸ The contract system had become such a key part of the labor system that a State Council directive issued in 1965 stipulated that enterprises “have the discretionary power to reduce fixed labor and increase temporary labor,” and that “temporary tasks to which regular workers have been devoted must gradually shift to temporary laborers.”²⁹ In a report submitted in 1964, Cao Diqui, Shanghai’s deputy mayor, who would soon become mayor, emphasized that “enterprises must further reform the existing system of labor and employment. They must employ fewer permanent workers and more temporary workers.” He recommended that more workers be recruited from peasants in accordance with the model of the “worker-peasant” (*yi gong yi nong*) system, under which peasants were periodically recruited to perform industrial jobs during slack agricultural seasons. Displaced regular workers would be assigned to work in rural communes, and their wages and benefits would be picked up by the communes rather than by the state. Rationalized in the noble name of eliminating the chasm between town and country, this system would have many

benefits. As deputy mayor Cao put it: “It allows labor to be recruited flexibly and conveniently [*linghuo fangbian*]. Its quantity can be increased or decreased when necessary [*neng jin neng chu, neng duo neng shao*], and thereby be made responsive to the needs of production.”³⁰

In some Shanghai factories, temporary laborers constituted the majority of the workforce. In one textile factory, for example, temporary laborers of peasant status—often younger and healthier—constituted over 80 percent of all production-line workers. A report to the Municipal Labor Bureau on the eve of the Cultural Revolution disclosed that many were “restless, discontented with their job” because “they saw no hope at all to obtain regular, permanent status.” One worker was quoted as saying, “There’s no hope to be stuck in this ‘worker-peasant’ category. When you become older, there will be no guarantee [retirement pension, medical benefits]. I am already forty-five years old. If I get sick, the factory can kick me out, just like that. I won’t be able to return home to do agricultural labor either. There’s no other way out except death [*silu yitiao*]. The only thing I can do is throw myself into the Huangpu River.”³¹ A significant number of the temporaries were female. An important element of post-1949 social mobilization was the state’s call for women—previously confined to the domestic sphere—to participate in socialist labor. During periods of economic contraction, however, women bore the brunt of the state policy of labor reduction. Despite Mao’s famous statement that “women hold up half of the sky,” it was also widely believed that women were suited only for less skilled tasks. The gendered division of labor channeled women into low-paying and less secure jobs in small-size neighborhood workshops, retail shops, and temporary labor teams. In 1964, it was reported that nearly 100,000 Shanghai women were so employed, many hired as part-timers, and local officials praised this system for having the virtue of “mobility and flexibility” (*linghuo jidong*): “It can satisfy the seasonal needs of urban economic production and service provision. Services can be provided nimbly, and in diverse ways. The labor force can be either large or small, work time long or short. . . . People work whenever there is work to do, and disperse when there’s no work.”³² Opposition to this flexible system became a major rallying point during the Cultural Revolution. From the point of view of many workers, the system was clearly exploitative and antisocialist and must be abolished. When workers’ mobilization began to disrupt production in late 1966, however, many were summarily laid off.³³

Those who lost their jobs and were relocated to the countryside during the economic retrenchment in the early 1960s faced a similar plight and could relate closely to the temporary workers. During the Great Leap, facing intense pressure to increase production, many enterprises aggressively

expanded their workforce.³⁴ The drive to reduce the urban labor force began in earnest in 1961–1962 and was justified by such high-sounding catchphrases as “supporting agriculture” (*zhi nong*). By 1963, some 20 to 25 million workers had “voluntarily” resettled in the villages, and the total national industrial workforce had been cut nearly by half.³⁵ “It was equivalent to moving an entire mid-sized country,” Premier Zhou Enlai remarked at a party conference in 1962. “In the whole world, this has been unprecedented in the past and will be unrepeatably in the future [*shi wu qian li, kong qian jue hou*].”³⁶ On a similar occasion, Mao spoke proudly of the power and efficiency of the Chinese Communist state in the massive labor restructuring: “Twenty million people can be readily assembled on a minute’s notice, and they can also be dismissed by merely waving the arm [*hu zhi ze lai, hui zhi ze qu*]. If it were not for the Communist Party that is in power, who would be able to accomplish such a feat?”³⁷

As part of the nationwide drive to reduce the labor force, Shanghai’s industrial workforce was downsized (*jingjian*) by about 15 to 20 percent—over 300,000 workers—between 1961 and 1963. About 200,000 of these workers were relocated to rural areas in the name of “supporting agriculture” and thereby lost their precious urban residential status.³⁸ Although the central government’s policy stipulated that newer and younger workers should be the first to be let go, in Shanghai many veteran workers lost their jobs because their salary grades were generally higher. “Downsizing offices” (*jingjian ban’gongshi*) were set up to manage the difficult tasks of labor reduction and relocation. Severance pay ranged from six months’ to two years’ salary. This, as Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun wrote, “was in essence a mass layoff, with the explicit promise that as soon as the national economy improved the repatriated workers would have the first option on returning to their old jobs.”³⁹ However, when the Chinese economy began to improve, the overwhelming demand for employment made the government reluctant to keep its promise. To defuse tensions, the municipal government allowed workers resettled in the rural suburbs to be rehired as temporary laborers. These workers retained their rural household registration, but their income was often split 40–60 with the commune (hence the term *siliu gong* or “40–60 workers”). However, the majority of repatriates did not receive this partial remedy.⁴⁰

The lot of many resettled workers abruptly plunged from that of relatively secure employment in the city to backbreaking labor in the fields with few benefits associated with urban residential status or *hukou*. The damaging consequences included loss of social status and economic security, separation from family, and, most important, the rural classification inherited by one’s children. Grievances directed to municipal and central government

agencies were common. A leaflet authored by a female textile worker named Xu portrayed the misery of the repatriated workers in graphic detail:

I was resettled to the countryside in 1962. At the time I had tuberculosis. The cadres pressured me to agree to be resettled. I have eight mouths to feed in my family. The resettlement subsidy I received was exhausted within a year, and we were unable to make it. I had no other choice but to go back to my factory to ask for my job back. But the cadres said they could do nothing. I returned to the village with the travel money donated by my coworkers. But we still couldn't make it. My children and I spent a year begging in Anhui. Whenever I begged at people's doorsteps, I wanted to cry. In order to feed my children, I had to endure. I, a textile worker, responded to the party's call to go to the countryside. We were promised that as soon as the economic situation improved we would be brought back. . . . Now our factory has already more than doubled the workers it had cut, but it has neglected us. In 1965 I went back three times to beg the leaders to address my problems; but it was all in vain. The third time they gave me 10 yuan to buy a ticket back to the village. What could I do? The only thing I could do was to go to Beijing to complain to Chairman Mao. I didn't have money. So I sold blood. I was paid 28 yuan and used it for travel. After I arrived in Beijing, I went to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. The cadres advised me to go back to the countryside and do my best to bring up my children, saying that they would contact the local government to help me. I received temporary relief equal to 40 percent of my original monthly salary. But I still hope to regain my job, and that's why I came back to participate in the Cultural Revolution.⁴¹

Local archives recorded many similar stories. In one case, a worker named Lu at the Shanghai Flannel Factory became a headache for both factory cadres and municipal agencies because of his repeated appeals for reinstatement.⁴² Lu and his wife had eight children, a circumstance that should have exempted him from being downsized. Lu's factory, however, received a request from his wife's work unit (*danwei*) to help pressure Lu to surrender his job. According to the report by Lu's factory, "We believed as Lu's wife had already agreed to resettle to the countryside, Lu himself should also agree so that the whole family could be relocated together. This would greatly facilitate the task of reducing urban population." Under intense pressure, Lu accepted 700 yuan in severance pay. Upon being relocated to a rural village, however, the Lu family was rejected by the production brigade and was unable to receive grain distribution. In desperation, Lu appealed to his work unit for help, and it dispatched a cadre to mediate. The commune agreed to take Lu. But the brigade refused to honor the commune's pledge, and Lu's case hung in limbo. Lu was eventually forced to sell his house and to give away two children. Lu, according to the report, "appeared to be so despondent that he was often in a trance. . . . He repeatedly

said that he no longer had the will to live and wanted to commit suicide by jumping into the Huangpu River.” In another case, a warehouse porter named Cao “voluntarily returned home to support agriculture, in response to the party’s call.” Although the exact circumstances of Cao’s loss of job were unclear, it was evident from official communications that Cao agreed to give up his job only under much pressure, and later documents acknowledged that his transfer might have been improper. Resettling together with his entire family of seven in northern Jiangsu in 1961, Cao was unable to make a living, as the region was hard hit by a sharp decline in agricultural production. In 1962, the family fled from the famine-stricken village to the neighboring province of Anhui. Rejected by the local commune and having used up its savings, the Cao family was forced to sell clothes in exchange for food and sent children out to beg. Cao repeatedly contacted his original work unit, pleading for help. During the “economistic wind” in late 1966, Cao and his family returned to Shanghai “in the name of participating in the Cultural Revolution,” and he demanded that he be reinstated in his job.⁴³

The grievances of Shanghai’s disaffected laboring population introduced decidedly socioeconomic themes into the otherwise unrelenting and often convoluted political rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. Despite the state’s policy of wage and welfare depression, however, grievances over socioeconomic issues during the Cultural Revolution tended to be expressed only in rather specific and local terms. Few rebels contended that the state’s overall policy was fundamentally faulty; instead, they often claimed that cadres had failed to implement Beijing’s or Mao’s correct policy. Shen Fuxiang, a temporary laborer and rebel activist, recalled decades later: “Even with all my grievances, I had never given up confidence in the party. . . . I firmly believed that the party was great and always correct. I believed that it was only cadres at the grassroots level who were bad. All our misfortunes would have been corrected if only Chairman Mao knew about our situation.”⁴⁴ To be sure, fierce struggles—often violent ones—were made against individual bureaucrats. But few attempts were made to situate socioeconomic struggles explicitly in the broader context of the distribution of political power under the state-socialist regime, and rebel workers did not address more general political issues with respect to the relationship of labor to the state or the vital issue of class relations in Chinese socialism.

No politics, however, is immune to the play of discursivity. While many of the grievances that became explosive during the Cultural Revolution turned on cost-of-living issues, the ones that provoked the most intense feelings were often those of security, equality, or justice. Despite the absence of explicit, systematic interpretations, the economistic activities nevertheless provided an arena for ordinary people to reexamine and

contest the system and relations of power in which their lives were ensnared. The lack of more articulate expressions notwithstanding, the essentially political significance of these issues must not be undervalued. They embodied moments of what Raymond Williams called the “emergent” or even “pre-emergent,” which—although “active and pressing but not fully articulated”—do not have to await systematic definition “before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action.”⁴⁵ Although working-class struggles over wages or the length of the workday under capitalism may be viewed as economistic (or “economic-corporate,” to borrow a term from Antonio Gramsci⁴⁶) and thus structurally intrinsic to a capitalist system, the same may not be true of similar struggles in state-socialist societies in which economic and political spheres lack differentiation and in which extraction of surplus labor is achieved through extraeconomic means. Social-class conflicts in capitalism tend to be encapsulated within the units and processes of production and therefore are largely localized and domesticated. However fierce the struggles over wages and work conditions may be, the system of private property is not directly at stake.⁴⁷ But in certain forms of noncapitalist society (including state-socialist society), the amalgamation of economic and political powers makes possible extraction of surplus labor through the coercive apparatus of the state. In such contexts, contests over economic issues challenge the state power underlying surplus extraction, and apparently economic struggles often become inseparable from political conflicts. Hence it is difficult to fix the literal meaning of individual conflicts, as they often overflow their boundaries and come to represent, at least potentially, moments of more general struggles.

Although the maelstrom of labor protests in Shanghai was overwhelmingly about wages, benefits, and work conditions, the grievances also touched on issues of self-worth, dignity, and autonomy, which meant that they were also about the political and ideological assumptions underlying the ways in which surplus labor was extracted and distributed. Such links among the economic, the political, and the ethical aspects were not lost on the Shanghai workers. “Within the enterprise there were significant differences between the temporary and permanent workers in areas of income, benefits, and social and political status,” one former temporary worker recalled. “We were simply inferior. In the factory, if people didn’t know your name, they would just call you *linshi gong* [temporary worker], which sounded contemptuous. Therefore the word *linshi gong* was a taboo among us. We would rather call one another *lin xiong* or ‘temporary brothers’ instead.”⁴⁸ The fundamental dispute was over the very boundaries of what counts as properly political and moral. The basic objectives of workers’

demands were, in effect, both economic and political, as even in the most purely economic or economic demands, it is often possible to trace yearnings for human dignity and popular democratic control of socio-economic life.

Crisis and Indeterminacy

The great crisis in Shanghai broke in late November and lasted until January. Most of the economic demands erupted after the formation of the WGHQ, which inspired many similar groups demanding the right to organize. On November 15, the Rebel Headquarters of Red Workers, colloquially known as the Red Workers, was formed. Composed largely of temporary workers, it soon became one of the largest rebel groups in the city, boasting over 400,000 members.⁴⁹ Under mounting pressure, on November 22, the municipal government agreed “not to dismiss temporary and contract workers” and to rehire those dismissed during the Cultural Revolution, as well as to refrain from retaliating against rebel workers by withholding their salary.⁵⁰

The mobilization of temporary workers in Shanghai coincided with similar protests in other parts of the country. In November, hundreds of temporary workers gathered in Beijing and declared the formation of the All-China Red Laborer Rebels’ Headquarters, colloquially known as the Quanhongzong. The group rapidly expanded, establishing branches in more than a dozen provinces. Disgruntled workers joined the organization for diverse reasons. “When I joined the group,” wrote one member in a later confession, “I merely had these thoughts in mind: (1) I may be able to convert to regular status; (2) I can receive the same political treatment and economic benefits as regular workers; and (3) I can receive a set of Chairman Mao’s *Selected Works* and a Little Red Book. I didn’t see anything wrong with that. That could save me some money.”⁵¹ In December and early January, Quanhongzong members staged rallies and sit-in protests at the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), China’s official labor union, and the Ministry of Labor. They demanded official recognition of the group, as well as systematic reform of labor policies, and shouted slogans such as “Thoroughly eliminate all forms of capitalist exploitative relations!” “We want revolution, we want rebellion, we want production, and we want food!” and “All proletariat of the world, unite!”⁵² On December 26, the workers met with members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG), including Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao, and

Yao Wenyuan. At the meeting, the workers blamed the injustices they suffered on enterprise and local officials, and denounced the system of flexible and disposable labor. Jiang Qing reportedly was moved to tears by the workers' plight and expressed her sympathy in unambiguous terms: "The system is capitalist through and through—to keep a number of hired workers, so as to cut down expenses on the part of capital. . . . I am getting so angry!" She urged the workers to take action to end the contract system: "You should wipe out the offices of labor assignment and occupy the ACFTU and Ministry of Labor—just let them take care of your food and lodging."⁵³ The Quanhongzong episode had a nationwide impact. In Shanghai, many temporary workers, either seasonally unemployed or dismissed in the earlier months of the Cultural Revolution, returned to demand employment and compensation. In Beijing, rebel workers even convened a meeting with over a hundred foreign journalists and diplomats to plead for international sympathy. The *People's Daily* sent correspondents but later refused to carry the story.⁵⁴

By late December, thousands of rusticated youth had returned to Shanghai to protest their hard work and low wages, besieging the municipal labor and agricultural bureaus. On December 27, they staged a massive sit-in in the city's central district. The rusticates demanded a meeting with mayor Cao Diqu, who eventually showed up, but his authority had by then become so eroded that his words meant little. The protest lasted until January 6 but ended without solving any problem.⁵⁵ By December, many resettled workers had also formed rebel groups and returned to Shanghai to demand reinstatement in their jobs and urban residential status—often with certificates of reinstatement granted by rural cadres who were under relentless pressure.⁵⁶ The largest group was the Rebel Headquarters of Shanghai Workers Supporting Agriculture. Colloquially known as Zhi Nong Si, it frequently organized its some 100,000 members and sympathizers for protests, shouting such slogans as "We want to return to work!" and "We want food!" Under immense pressure, the Municipal Labor Bureau partly acceded to their demands, recognizing their action as revolutionary and promising assistance.⁵⁷

The heady and unprecedented freedom briefly afforded by the Cultural Revolution of forming autonomous political organizations resulted in the emergence of a bewildering number and variety of groups in the city. According to an estimate by the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee (SMPC), the total number of groups reached over 5,300, of which some had only a few members. Among these, Perry and Li counted as many as 350 "economistic associations."⁵⁸ By mid-December, many government

departments had become paralyzed, and officials involved in negotiations with protesters faced a particularly difficult situation and often were forced to capitulate. Mayor Cao Diqui later acknowledged:

The leadership of the old Municipal Party Committee had largely become paralyzed. The offices of the municipal party secretariat and various government departments had been occupied or seized, and reception offices were assaulted. Most of the municipal leaders were dispersed and had to operate on their own, and it was difficult even to convene meetings of the Standing Party Committee. Some newfound rebel groups made demands of all kinds, including many economic demands. Some were reasonable, but others were not. Whether they were reasonable or not, in principle they should be deferred until the later phase of the Cultural Revolution. But some leading cadres were unable to withstand the pressure and capitulated to some of the demands, in disregard of the party's policies.⁵⁹

At a meeting in December, Shanghai's party chief, Chen Pixian, noted: "In a mass movement, political struggle will inevitably spread to the economy. . . . There is no way we can stop this." Chen urged municipal officials to "deal with problems with flexibility."⁶⁰ In some cases, officials were unable to accommodate the rebels' demands because of central government regulations. Reluctant to antagonize the workers, they merely covered the expenses for the protesters to take their cases to the capital.

Under great pressure, cadres at all levels were compelled to make concessions, releasing huge sums of cash. The East China Power Authority, for example, paid out on January 5 alone a total of 1.28 million yuan, about four times its monthly payroll, as back wages and bonuses, and the party chief of the agency was even nicknamed the "king of authorization" (*qianzi dawang*).⁶¹ In another case, when a sampan rower named Wu and her seventeen workmates went to the Shanghai Communications Bureau to inquire why their monthly wages had been reduced from 70 yuan to 40 yuan after 1956, a deputy director immediately approved the back wages of the past ten years. The eighteen workers received 22,600 yuan altogether, and Wu and her husband were paid 4,128 yuan.⁶² It was reported that on January 3 alone, accountants of several hundred enterprises lined up at banks to withdraw cash. During the first seven days of January, some 38 million yuan was withdrawn to pay for back wages and bonuses, nearly double the normal amount.⁶³ Concessions by officials culminated in a secret meeting convened by Mayor Cao on January 1, 1967. The meeting approved a five-point guideline:

- Downsized workers relocated to the countryside may be given work in their original factories.

- Unemployed urban youth may be assigned jobs.
- Collectively owned neighborhood enterprises may be reclassified as state enterprises, and welfare benefits of their workers may be raised accordingly.
- Wage levels in rural areas may be raised from grade 5 to grade 8.
- Long-term temporary and contract workers may be converted to regular status.

At the meeting, Mayor Cao relayed Secretary Chen Pixian's admonition: "Relax a bit on economic issues, don't be obstructionist; think and operate independently [*duli sikao, duli zuozhan*]." Cao also remarked, "For these issues, it is useless to ask for instructions from the Party Central [Committee] or the State Council; we'd better just go ahead and take action."⁶⁴

Work stoppages and workers' desertion of their posts became rampant in late December and early January, when the city's economic turmoil brought about by the wind of economism was compounded by clashes between two rival coalitions that dominated the scene of mass politics in Shanghai, one led by the WGHQ and the other by the Workers' Scarlet Guards. Claiming 800,000 members, the Scarlet Guards recruited mainly from skilled workers, party activists, and low-level cadres and had once enjoyed the support of the municipal leadership. In the violent clashes of late December, the WGHQ dramatically defeated the Scarlet Guards.⁶⁵ Fearful of imminent reprisal, Scarlet Guard members staged a mass exodus from Shanghai and attempted to go to Beijing to petition the national leadership. A large WGHQ contingent intercepted the Scarlet Guards at Kunshan, a small town on the outskirts of Shanghai, and a violent battle ensued. In what was dubbed the Kunshan Incident, the crucial railway linking Shanghai with Beijing was severed. In the wake of the defeat of the Scarlet Guards, the triumphant WGHQ rebels harassed and assaulted their rivals and forced Scarlet Guard members, including many skilled workers and low-level cadres, to desert the factories. Production declined precipitously, and the city's economy was practically paralyzed because numerous workers walked away from their posts to participate in rebellion, travel to Beijing to lodge complaints, or simply go into hiding.⁶⁶

Economic disruption was particularly acute in the transportation sector. Work on the railways came to a halt as drivers, conductors, and signal operators stopped work to engage in rebellion. Work stoppage at the port of Shanghai also caused major interruptions. On average, over 70 cargo ships were stuck at the port every day, and on one day as many as 114 ships were held up.⁶⁷ Many factories had to shut down because they had run out of supplies. Rumors spread confusion among the city's general populace.

Stores were swamped with customers, many of whom had recently received large sums in cash payments. Shoppers purchased almost everything in sight. In the first eight days of January, the sales at No.1 Department Store—Shanghai's main shopping venue—jumped 25.1 percent compared with the same period in December and 36.3 percent compared with the previous year. A later WGHQ pamphlet vividly recounted:

On January 8, hardly had the store opened the door when more than three hundred shoppers dashed for the bicycles. Even some luxury commodities such as very expensive imported watches priced at 4,000 to 5,000 yuan, which in normal times few people would buy, were quickly cleared out. Sales of clothing made from expensive woolen fabric also jumped severalfold. Customers were generally anxious, and they appeared to be far less concerned with whether goods were unsuitable or prices too expensive. They were more worried that they couldn't get hold of the goods. As one comrade from the Shanghai Harbor Bureau said: "My salary used to be 40 yuan, now it has been increased to 62 yuan, plus more than 300 yuan in back pay. Now I buy things just as if they were free."⁶⁸

The rush for consumer goods was short lived, however, because the supply of merchandise was quickly exhausted. Anxious and angry citizens soon besieged shops in search of daily necessities, such as charcoal briquettes, cooking oil, and toilet paper, resulting in panic buying of scarce supplies, as well as runs on Shanghai's banks.

By December, political and economic turmoil had also spread to Shanghai's rural communes and farms. Peasants and state-farm workers entered the city to rally against the local officials accused of being responsible for their miseries. Rural party organizations were in a state of paralysis. A letter to a local paper described the widespread laxity of labor discipline: "In January of last year [1967] . . . the farm members basically did nothing. Even if they attended to their work, they came off duty very early. Some people did not go to work but stayed in their dormitory sleeping and playing poker. Others simply loitered about in the city."⁶⁹ One of the major issues of contention involved the year-end distribution, as many peasants demanded a more equal share of their harvests. This resulted in the reduction or even depletion of production funds in some communes.⁷⁰ The local press reported that there was a contagious "evil economic wind" of "dividing all, eating all, and finishing all," allegedly instigated by cadres who attempted to "distract a solemn political struggle into crooked economism."⁷¹ The peasants' agitations were blamed on the "capitalist roaders," who were accused of "spreading the wind of economism from the city to rural areas . . . and undermining the socialist rural economy."⁷² The depth of discontent may be illustrated by a poster spotted in Nanhui, a county south of Shanghai. "We

are second-class citizens,” the peasants protested. The countryside was considered a “general rubbish heap” to which criminals, reactionaries, and “anyone else in need of remolding is sent.” The peasants also protested that rural areas lacked schools, cultural facilities, medical services, newspapers, and competent officials. It was difficult for young men to find wives because country girls preferred urban workers, since city workers lived in apartments and earned higher salaries, while poorly paid peasants lived in thatched-roofed huts “exposed to wind and rain, and often about to collapse.” Above all, it was contended that the peasants were deprived of the right to express themselves. “Workers, soldiers, and Party members have associations to represent their interests, but we the peasants have no voice.”⁷³

Clearly, the cause of Shanghai’s near paralysis differed from the explanation later put forth by Maoist leaders, who blamed the breakdown on either hidden class enemies or corrupted cadres desperate to undermine the Cultural Revolution. The paralysis was the result of a complex conjuncture of events—uninhibited mass mobilization, rampant factional conflicts, and abrupt disintegration of governmental authorities. Invariably appropriating the rhetoric of the time, which directed rebellion against such elusive targets as capitalist roaders or revisionists, the claims of Shanghai’s discontented laboring population were driven in significant part by practical everyday grievances and amounted to progressively more militant demands for socioeconomic justice and reform. Swamped on all sides by denunciations, protests, and calls for rebellion, Shanghai’s party apparatus was utterly incapable of holding out any longer.

Existing accounts of Shanghai’s January Revolution typically begin with the breakdown in the city and then portray how the rebels responded to Mao’s call by directly taking power. In Stuart Schram’s account, the January events set off a radicalizing course that pushed the Cultural Revolution to a new height by giving birth to a “Shanghai model” of popular political action to be “held up for emulation.”⁷⁴ William Hinton wrote that the Shanghai workers “took power in plant after plant to keep production going . . . and finally moved to take power in the city as a whole. . . . Revolutionary rebels, primarily workers, took responsibility for China’s largest city and main industrial base.”⁷⁵ According to Harry Harding, the breakdown of political authority in late 1966 resulted in rampant political and economic turmoil, which prompted Mao to adopt an extraordinary strategy in early 1967: “Mao’s response to the collapse of authority was, in effect, to authorize radical groups to push aside the discredited (or recalcitrant) Party committees and constitute new organs of political power in their place.”⁷⁶

The broad outline of these narratives, which posits a direct relationship among mass action, Mao’s charismatic authority, and a new mode

of political governance, warrants reconsideration. In early January, many of Shanghai's rebels stepped in to fill the political vacuum, as municipal authorities had all but ceased to function. Some groups acted quickly, beginning by seizing control of key communication agencies. On January 4, the rebels seized the *Wen Hui Daily*, the city's leading newspaper. Others took over the *Liberation Daily* and the municipal television and radio stations.⁷⁷ Many of these events, however, were not directly connected either with the Beijing leadership or with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, Mao's envoys, who had just arrived in Shanghai. Contrary to prevalent views that stress the role of Maoist leaders, they appear on closer scrutiny to be for the most part uncoordinated mass actions. For example, in the seizure of the *Wen Hui Daily*, the rebels' connection with the Beijing leadership was tenuous at best. According to Zhu Yongjia, a party propagandist who turned into a rebel leader, the takeover was motivated more by disputes over editorial style than by substantive ideological concerns. Arriving at a time when the city's party propaganda apparatus was paralyzed, the paper's new chief editor printed nearly identical content to that of the *Liberation Daily*, the organ of the SMPC. The staff members became dissatisfied with the editorial timidity of the new leadership. Apprehensive about being seized by other rebels in the city, some staff members proposed taking over the paper.⁷⁸ Nervous about the political risks, they first approached Chen Pixian, who was himself under siege and declined to intervene. Chen suggested that the rebels seek advice from the Beijing leadership and even made arrangements for the airplane tickets. In Beijing, the paper's representatives tried feverishly to obtain approval from the CCRG. However, neither Zhang Chunqiao nor Yao Wenyuan offered clear support or even agreed to meet with them. The representatives communicated the CCRG's noncommittal response back to Shanghai on January 4. However, their colleagues in Shanghai had already begun to act, and the takeover went ahead anyway.⁷⁹ The political situation in Shanghai in early January was so fluid that it was beyond the direct control of both central and local leaders.

The case of the *Wen Hui Daily* demonstrates that much of what transpired in early January was a series of pragmatic attempts by local political forces—highly fragmented and poorly coordinated—to stabilize the bewilderingly chaotic situation in a city close to political and economic breakdown. While the party machine had collapsed, the various rebel factions in Shanghai had prepared few coherent, well-defined programs. Drawing from whatever political resources were available, these factional leaders improvised ad hoc measures to restore order, as well as to fix public meanings at a moment when the familiar framework of political reference had all but crumbled.

The sequence of events in the first two weeks of January is critical for a more nuanced understanding of Shanghai's January episode. It is thus necessary to examine the complex and fluid circumstances of two key political declarations, the "Message to All the People of Shanghai" and the "Urgent Notice," published on January 5 and 9, 1967. These two documents have usually been seen to have catalyzed the popular rebel coalition that took over the governance of the city and declared into being what became known as the January Revolution. A more careful examination of the context in which they were produced, however, may considerably modify our understanding of their significance.

The dozen rebel groups that joined forces in early January to participate in the city's governing affairs did so in the context of the virtual disintegration of established chains of command. On January 1, the same day Mayor Cao Diqui convened a secret meeting to discuss how to appease disgruntled workers, an emergency meeting was called by Chen Pixian, Shanghai's first party secretary and topmost power holder. Chen was instructed by Premier Zhou Enlai to take immediate action to end the Scarlet Guards' exodus and stabilize the economic situation. Representatives of the WGHQ and various Red Guard groups attended the meeting. Because the city's official communication channels had all but ceased to function, it is not entirely clear who took the initiative to produce a public statement to persuade workers to return to work.⁸⁰ At the meeting, WGHQ representatives challenged Secretary Chen's authority. Some accused him of causing the economic turmoil by irresponsibly authorizing cash payouts, while others took the opportunity to pressure him to authorize additional subsidies. The Red Guards were skeptical of the authenticity of Premier Zhou's instruction, suspecting that the matter was merely another plot by scheming officials. Despite squabbling and confusion, the meeting resolved to form a Frontline Command to deal with the city's economic emergency, and to draft a public statement, the "Message to All People of Shanghai" (hereafter the "Message"), which was finalized on January 3.

By all accounts the opening salvo of the January Revolution, the "Message" was an attempt to stabilize the economy; it was, however, drafted in response to a highly specific situation that in fact had little to do with economism. In late December, the clashes between two of the city's largest workers' organizations, the WGHQ and the Scarlet Guards, had severely aggravated the city's economic dislocation. The "Message" pleaded with the Scarlet Guards to return to work, stressing the importance of maintaining production: "Lately, in many factories and plants, it has occurred that some or even the majority of the Scarlet Guards have suspended production and deserted their posts. This runs directly counter to the stipulation

by the Party Center on taking firm hold of the revolution and promoting production and directly affects the people's livelihood and the development of national economic construction."⁸¹ The "Message" alleged that local party officials had incited workers to undermine production, thereby causing economic disruptions. Such charges were largely groundless and stale accusations originally hurled at rebel workers by both local party officials and the conservative Scarlet Guards that they had mobilized into action.

The "Message" was endorsed by eleven groups, including the WGHQ, the largest rebel group in the city. The position of the WGHQ leadership was ambivalent. Wang Hongwen, the WGHQ's top commander, appeared to be uninterested. Wang suspected that Secretary Chen Pixian had forged Premier Zhou's instruction, and that restoring railway transportation and economic production was merely a conspiracy "aiming at diverting the direction of struggles."⁸² According to Zhu Yongjia, Wang "sat in the corner, didn't say a word."⁸³ Wang Minglong, another WGHQ leader, corroborated this: "As soon as the meeting began, Wang Hongwen found a seat in a corner, dozing off and snoring loudly. He slept through the meeting and only woke up in the morning. After checking with me how the meeting was going, he said: 'What's the point of having a meeting like this? There's no sense at all. Let's leave!'" Wang Hongwen flew to Beijing to find Zhang Chunqiao, who objected to the WGHQ's participation in the stabilization effort: "You should focus on criticizing and struggling against the SMPC. If you help the SMPC solve its problems and stop criticizing them, that will only make them happy."⁸⁴ The rebels in Shanghai, however, proceeded nonetheless. The WGHQ's endorsement was signed without Wang Hongwen's authorization by Fan Zuodong, one of the WGHQ leaders who attended the meeting.⁸⁵ Published in the *Wen Hui Daily* on January 5, the "Message" was largely ignored by many rebels in Shanghai. Zhu Yongjia recalled, "It was merely a handbill, and we didn't really take it seriously."⁸⁶ Li Xun stated, "At the time all sorts of 'notices,' 'manifestos,' 'declarations,' 'ultimatums,' and so on were as numerous as the hairs on the body of an ox. Few people noticed it and would expect that this document would have such a significant impact."⁸⁷

The second document, the "Urgent Notice," was produced under similarly chaotic and confusing circumstances and with little coordination among the various parties involved. The statement was drafted at a meeting of over thirty groups on January 8 that was called by Geng Jinzhang, head of the WGHQ's Second Regiment. Again, Wang Hongwen appeared unresponsive and refused to attend the meeting. When Geng asked for Zhang Chunqiao's advice on how to respond to the economic wind sweeping through the city, Zhang's response was vague at best: "What can I

say? Let's consult the masses, and see what they think." When Geng invited Zhang and Yao to attend the meeting, they declined, replying that it would be more appropriate if they did not attend.⁸⁸

Ironically, while Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen showed little interest in combating economism, Secretary Chen Pixian played an important role in the process. In this case, the role reversal between local bureaucrats and rebel leaders is intriguing. Chen urged the meeting's attendees to discuss the deteriorating economic situation and suggest solutions, but rebel representatives repeatedly cut him off. Geng Jinzhang attempted to pressure Chen to dismiss municipal bureau and agency chiefs, apparently thinking that in this way the economic wind could be stopped. Chen then suggested that another public notice be drafted, and the proposal was accepted.⁸⁹ Revealing the extent of crisis in Shanghai, the "Urgent Notice" rhetorically accused the Shanghai party officials of "making use of economic benefits to distort the struggle and to incite one group of people against another, causing breakdowns in production and transportation. . . . They have liberally distributed state funds and property, arbitrarily increasing wages and welfare, granting all kinds of extravagant allowances and subsidies, and even encouraging people to occupy public buildings." The "Urgent Notice" called for the following:

- The rebels must resolutely comply with Chairman Mao's call to "grasp revolution and promote production" and remain fast at posts of production.
- All Shanghai workers traveling in other parts of China to exchange revolutionary experience must return immediately. Their travel certificates are henceforth invalid, and the money distributed as travel subsidy must be paid back.
- All state funds must be immediately frozen, except normal operational expenses, in order to prevent the state economy from suffering from losses.
- Controversial issues relating to wages, back pay, and benefits should be addressed in the later phase of the Cultural Revolution.
- The police will punish those who commit crimes, those who oppose Chairman Mao and the CCRG, and those who sabotage production.⁹⁰

Contrary to what has often been assumed, neither Zhang Chunqiao nor Yao Wenyuan, Mao's emissaries in Shanghai, played a significant role in the production of the two texts iconic of the January Revolution. Indeed, insofar as the events in the early days of 1967 were concerned, there was little coordination or direction from the Maoist leadership. Zhang and

Yao did not arrive in Shanghai until January 4, after the “Message” had already been drafted. When *Wen Hui Daily* staff asked for Yao’s authorization to publish the “Message,” Yao tersely declined, replying that he and Zhang were not adequately informed about the situation in the city.⁹¹ According to Zhu Yongjia, when they were shown the freshly printed *Wen Hui Daily* on January 5, in which the “Message” was printed, Zhang and Yao appeared astonished. Zhang remarked, “How come we knew nothing about this in advance? We should have been notified,” and Yao said that the matter should have been reported to the Party Center.⁹² Interestingly, Chen Pixian, Shanghai’s top power holder, was closely involved in the process. He called the meeting on January 1 and also authorized the printing of 200,000 copies of the “Message” “to be disseminated throughout the city.”⁹³ On January 8, two days after Chen was denounced at a mass rally of over one million people and Shanghai’s party leadership was declared ousted, Chen proposed issuing another statement to combat economic disorder, although it was unlikely that the language linking economism to party officials was his choice. At the meeting, Chen signed the “Urgent Notice” on behalf of the SMPC, even though this body was supposed to have already been overthrown.⁹⁴

The situation in Shanghai in early January was highly chaotic, lacking the kind of communication and coordination—much less the systematically articulated program—that was retroactively attributed to the event. Various local factions were divided over many important issues regarding political goals and mobilizational strategies. When the “Message” was sent to the *Wen Hui Daily* for publication, the rebels in control of the paper expressed doubts about the document. One of its leaders acknowledged later, “We only knew that it was an important statement, but didn’t understand why. Neither did we realize that it was soon to become extremely important.”⁹⁵ The plurality of positions may also be illustrated by the active political strength of the Red Workers, the largest group of temporary workers and the second-largest workers’ group in the city, which vehemently opposed any antieconomistic measures. On January 5, the same day the “Message” was published, the Red Workers held a mass rally in the city’s central plaza to denounce the municipal officials, declaring that “the system of hiring temporary and contract laborers is a remnant of the labor system of capitalism.” Tens of thousands attended and, according to a news report, “pledged themselves to smash the unjust system under which they were employed, and to set up a new system in line with Mao Zedong Thought.”⁹⁶

The drafting of the “Urgent Notice” a few days later met even greater difficulties. Aiming to curb economism, the notice was resisted not only by the temporary workers but also by various segments within the WGHQ

ranks. Wang Hongwen refused to attend the meeting and instead sent Dai Liqing, another WGHQ leader, as his delegate. At the meeting, Dai made highly acerbic statements: "To oppose economism is tantamount to redirecting the spearhead at the masses. This is totally wrong!" "To oppose economism is to divert the struggle against Chen Pixian and Cao Diqu. This is a conspiracy!" When Dai telephoned Wang for instructions about whether to endorse the "Urgent Notice," Wang raved, "You must not do this! If you do this, our organization will collapse."⁹⁷ Although the exact relationship between the WGHQ and temporary workers remains unclear, what seems certain is that there was a significant presence of economic elements within its ranks.⁹⁸ Some accounts of the Cultural Revolution even portray the WGHQ as "composed primarily of such underprivileged workers as apprentices and temporary contract workers,"⁹⁹ an estimate that is most likely overstated.

Although the specifics remain unclear, the extent of opposition was suggested in a *Wen Hui Daily* editorial that denounced "a small group of diehard elements who . . . continue to resist stubbornly" and revealed that rumors were spreading that "unless the implementation of the 'Urgent Notice' takes consideration of the masses' interests, the masses will rise up and rebel against it." Blaming resistance on "evil instigators," the editorial declared that "the 'Urgent Notice' has been authorized by Chairman Mao. Those who dare to defy it in fact oppose Chairman Mao, and we will mercilessly smash their dog-heads."¹⁰⁰ Despite opposition, the "Urgent Notice" was endorsed by thirty-two groups, as compared with the eleven that had approved the "Message" a few days earlier. This threefold increase, however, was somewhat misleading. It represented a fragmentation rather than a broadening of support. The "Message" carried the signature of only one major workers' group, the WGHQ, while the "Urgent Notice" was signed by the WGHQ and seven or eight groups that had originally been its affiliates. The point of multiple signatories, as Neale Hunter perceptively observed in his eyewitness account of the January Revolution in Shanghai, was perhaps to make the political alliance appear larger and stronger than it really was or to disguise the fact that groups outside Shanghai made up much of its strength.¹⁰¹

The absence of the WGHQ's chief at the critical meeting on January 8 posed a problem. Without WGHQ support, the "Urgent Notice" would be only a piece of paper. Notably, the WGHQ's endorsement was signed by Geng Jinzhang, who was pressured into representing the entire WGHQ organization. Geng was the commander of the Second Regiment, which was nominally affiliated with the WGHQ. Several groups rejected the document. Fei Mingzhang, the delegate of the Red Workers, demanded that

modifications be made to accommodate the temporary laborers. After his request was refused, Fei crossed out the group's signature and withdrew from the meeting. When he was confronted by others about whether he was really able to represent the group's 400,000 members, he replied: "Of course I can!"¹⁰² A group of WGHQ leaders, including Wang Hongwen himself, later confronted Geng Jinzhang and challenged his authority to represent the WGHQ.¹⁰³ Published on January 9, the "Urgent Notice" appeared on the lower part of the third page of the *Wen Hui Daily*, buried among the numerous announcements, declarations, notices, and pamphlets of all stripes that were constantly flooding the city.

The absence of the term "economism" in the original texts of both declarations is intriguing and suggests the dearth of a coherent program, despite Maoist leaders' later claim of a shared, unified agenda. In fact, the events in early January were largely ad hoc responses by some local forces that did not present articulate and coherent political meanings. They represented, so to speak, practical or makeshift solutions in a highly fluid situation with a variety of interpretive and political possibilities. This calls into question later official narratives (as well as their various scholarly incarnations) that reduce the multifaceted events to a single thin reading that interprets them solely as a concerted and self-conscious effort on the part of the Shanghai workers to take production and revolution into their own hands as guided by Maoist leaders. In fact, within the broader community of Shanghai's rebels, neither opposition to economism nor restoration of production emerged as the dominant political interpretation or mobilizational program, and different political tendencies and viewpoints battled with one another in the fierce factional conflicts characteristic of the Cultural Revolution. This politically open and saturated situation, however, would be brought to a close very soon.

Revolutionary Alchemy: "What Kind of Stuff Is Economism?"

The republication of the first Shanghai declaration in the national propaganda organs on January 9 signaled a critical turning point. In this case, local, impromptu events were resignified as the political language of the Cultural Revolution began to take on new import. During the CCRG meeting in Beijing on January 8, Mao praised the "Message to All the People of Shanghai" exuberantly. The next day, on January 9, a *People's Daily's* editorial incorporated a number of Mao's remarks: "The 'Message to All the

People of Shanghai' is an extremely important document. It holds high the great red banner of the proletarian revolutionary line represented by Chairman Mao and sounds a clarion call to continue the vigorous counteroffensive upon the bourgeois reactionary line. . . . This question does not just concern Shanghai alone but the whole country as well."¹⁰⁴ Thus what had been local, extraordinary responses in Shanghai were recast and given national significance, with a major impact on the Cultural Revolution as a whole.

At this critical juncture of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's position was ambivalent, if not contradictory. On the one hand, Mao appeared keen on supporting the thrust of the mass movement, lavishly praising the Shanghai rebels' seizure of key party organs: "Internal rebellions are fine. This is one class overthrowing another. This is a great revolution."¹⁰⁵ Mao's support of the rebels' takeover was indicative of his skepticism of party discipline and his view that bureaucratic resistance to the Cultural Revolution could be overcome only through widened mass mobilization. On the other hand, the burning issue in this new context was how to restore economic order. Mao was clearly concerned with the disruption of production, as he remarked at the meeting on January 8: "We must speak of grasping revolution and promoting production. We must not make revolution in isolation from production." Mao considered the Shanghai rebels' attempt at economic stabilization and taking over municipal power a model for national emulation: "The upsurge of revolutionary power in Shanghai has brought hope to the whole country. It cannot fail to influence the whole of East China and all provinces and cities in the country. 'Message to All the People of Shanghai' . . . refers to the city of Shanghai, but the problem it discussed is of national importance."¹⁰⁶ As recorded by his official biographers, over a week later, on January 16, Mao critically qualified the meaning of "power seizure" or "takeover," emphasizing the continuity of the business of government—"Takeover is great. But [those who take over the power] should be in charge of only political affairs [*zhengwu*], not administrative or economic business [*yewu*]. Regular business should still be managed by the original staff. We're only responsible for supervising them."¹⁰⁷

Beginning in mid-January 1967, the direction of the Cultural Revolution took a subtle but significant new turn. Expressed formulaically as "grasping revolution and promoting production," the task of maintaining production and restoring economic order was lifted out of the fluid local context of Shanghai and raised—for the first time during the Cultural Revolution—to the paramount status of a national policy imperative. On January 11, the theme of antieconomism appeared for the first time in the

national media. Directly ordered by Mao, the Beijing leadership voiced enthusiastic approval of the initiatives taken in Shanghai in a special congratulatory telegraph:

Your "Urgent Notice" issued on January 9, 1967 is excellent. The guiding principles which you have put forward and the actions you have taken are entirely correct. You have upheld the dictatorship of the proletariat, persisted in the general direction of socialism and put forward the fighting task of opposing the economism of counterrevolutionary revisionism.

You have formulated a correct policy in accordance with Chairman Mao's principle of "grasping revolution and promoting production." Your revolutionary actions have set a brilliant example for the working class and the revolutionary masses throughout the country.¹⁰⁸

The telegram was jointly signed by the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the Central Military Committee (CMC), and the CCRG. It was unprecedented that the party leadership in the name of all its highest organs telegraphed some local groups to approve their action. Through this extraordinary act, the contingent events in Shanghai were retroactively transformed into necessity and reinscribed into a narrative in which the Leader and the masses, and state and societal interests, became seamlessly fused.

Starting in mid-January, a plethora of party directives were issued to provide policy guidelines for suppressing "counterrevolutionary economism." It was claimed that "a handful of capitalist roaders in the Party had hoodwinked workers and peasants into leaving production posts," and class enemies were blamed for "leading some masses to pursue personal and temporary interests in disregard of state and collective interests." Party committees at all levels were ordered to battle such currents. "The tendency to indulge in economism must be stopped immediately," and anyone found perpetrating such activities was to be punished "according to party discipline and state law."¹⁰⁹

On January 12, the *People's Daily* reprinted Shanghai's "Urgent Notice" on the front page, together with an editorial ominously titled "Oppose Economism and Smash the Latest Counterattack by the Bourgeois Reactionary Line." The editorial reiterated the message of combating economism and restoring production, and a single master interpretation was forged to thin out the saturated field of indeterminacy. This reading was enabled by two interrelated strategies. First, as noted earlier, it was based on the retroactive postulation of unitary identity and shared purpose, and the transformation of fragmentary, impromptu acts into coherent political action in accordance with the official policy. The official story praised mass spontaneity but mythologized haphazard local activities as if they resulted

from planned action or the influence of leaders, thereby obscuring the messy contingency and idiosyncrasy that actually prevailed. Second, economic disturbances were attributed to machination by class enemies. The editorial declared that the events in Shanghai marked “a new stage of the Cultural Revolution,” in which enemies resisted in camouflaged ways. Their cunning trick was economism, which was portrayed in remarkably vitriolic fashion:

What kind of stuff is economism?

It is a form of bribery that caters to the psychology of a few backward people among the masses, corrupts the masses' revolutionary will, and leads their political struggle onto the wrong road of economism, inducing them to disregard the interests of the state and the collective and long-term interests and to pursue only personal and short-term interests. This economism disrupts social production, the national economy, and socialist ownership. It promotes the tendency toward the spontaneous development of capitalism and encourages revisionist material incentives in a vain attempt to destroy the economic base of socialism.

This economism uses bourgeois spontaneity to replace proletarian revolutionary consciousness, uses bourgeois ultrademocracy to replace proletarian democratic centralism and the proletarian sense of organization and discipline, uses bourgeois reactionary illegalities to replace proletarian dictatorship and the extensive democracy operating under it, and uses capitalist ownership to replace socialist ownership. Economism is a new form in which the bourgeois reactionary line launches a big counterattack against the proletarian revolutionary line.¹¹⁰

The underlying ideological rationale of such rhetoric is familiar. On the one hand, it was based on the premise that without the vanguard leadership of the party, working-class spontaneity could lead only to bourgeois economism and anarchism. On the other hand, it was derived from an ideological glorification of production and development that gave absolute priority to public over private interests. “Politics in command,” a familiar political slogan during the Mao era, implied in this instance the use of revolutionary politics in the service of a production apparatus in which workers functioned as mere “cogs” (*luosiding*), and the differences among particularistic needs, the national economy, and the interests of the collectivity (as represented by the party and the state) had all but disappeared.

Several themes in this emerging discourse are worth noting. First, through a political sleight of hand, economic disruption as a result of popular socio-economic struggles was linked to the “bourgeois-reactionary line,” an important concept brought out a few months before to denounce cadres' suppression of mass activities. Conversely, restoring economic order was

associated with rebellion in the common Cultural Revolution parlance. Second, in a tactical move that typified the official class ideology of the Cultural Revolution, a phantasmic link was created between economism and the “bourgeois elements, landlords, rich peasants, and counterrevolutionaries,” who allegedly used economism to undermine the Cultural Revolution. Third, a political linkage was established between economism and “bourgeois spontaneity,” “ultrademocracy,” “ultraleft,” and “anarchism,” all abusive terms that would play an increasingly important role as the Cultural Revolution continued. Familiar concepts and actions were redefined in a rapidly changing political situation. In the Orwellian world of state-propagated mythology, popular struggles were transformed magically into counterrevolutionary plots. “Ultraleft in form but ultraright in essence” was the alchemic formula.

The national promotion of a discursively simplified and ideologically transformed Shanghai experience had an immediate impact on the positions of political figures and groups in the city. At a meeting on January 11, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan spoke glowingly of Beijing’s approval while trying to explain away their vague positions a few days earlier: “We came to Shanghai as CCRG investigators. . . . We have not yet appeared at mass meetings to meet with the masses, not because we’re afraid of the masses, but because we need more time, and to work in a more calm manner. Our capacity as investigators means that our job is to investigate rather than to be the masses’ nanny or to monopolize decisions.”¹¹¹ The next day, a massive celebratory rally was convened at which Zhang and Yao tried to claim the political credit and to recast the events of the previous weeks in a new light. The “Message” and the “Urgent Notice,” Zhang claimed, “are the living proof of the victories we have accomplished.”¹¹² Invoking Mao’s authority, Zhang created the misleading impression that Mao had directed the measures of economic stabilization from the very start. Inconsistencies in political signification were thus erased, and a view of unified action and purpose was projected backward onto the recent chaotic past. The rally ended with the reading of “Telegram Saluting Chairman Mao,” which reiterated the slogans of “opposing counterrevolutionary economism” and “grasping revolution and promoting production” and concluded with a call for the “great unity of all revolutionary people of Shanghai.”¹¹³

The Making of a New Political Model

Beginning in mid-January, a new paradigm of the Cultural Revolution was emerging tentatively in the national political arena. In conjunction with an-

tieconomism, other major themes, such as power seizure, great alliance, promoting production, and strengthening the police functions of the proletarian dictatorship, were also enunciated.

The new Shanghai Model advocated power seizure as official policy: “Of all the important things, the possession of power is the most important! Such being the case, the revolutionary masses, with a deep hatred for the class enemy, clench their teeth and, with steel-like determination, make up their mind to unite, form a great alliance, seize power! Seize power!! Seize power!!!”¹¹⁴ But power seizure needs to be scrutinized and understood in its specific circumstances. On the one hand, the militancy of the slogan notwithstanding, power seizures were advocated when local party and state authorities had already largely collapsed under the combined pressure of bureaucratic fragmentation and escalating rebel assaults; on the other hand, power seizure was billed as a necessary response to economism and thereby was linked to restoring economic order, in particular, restoring industrial production and transportation. The significance of the rebels’ power seizure in Shanghai was therefore said to lie precisely in its opposition to economism, in its “fearlessly launching an extensive counterattack against the new counteroffensive of the bourgeois reactionary line”¹¹⁵—a convenient code term for “counterrevolutionary economism.”

Power seizures were further qualified by the imperative of forging a “revolutionary great alliance” and restoring local political authority. “Great alliance” (*dalianhe*) was in fact deemed the hallmark of this new phase of the Cultural Revolution—the January Revolution. “The proletarian revolutionaries unite and seize power—this is the strategic task for the new phase of the Great Cultural Revolution.” This “revolutionary great storm,” announced a *People’s Daily* editorial, “began in Shanghai. The revolutionary masses in Shanghai have called it the ‘January Revolution.’”¹¹⁶ Although alliance among the groups involved in the power seizure was originally promulgated by the top leadership to address the increasing fragmentation of the mass movement, it also in part reflected the desire of rebel organizations to overcome prevalent factional conflicts. The formula, however, would soon become a political euphemism for amalgamating, dissolving, and reining in the numerous mass organizations formed in the heyday of mass movement. The great alliance was prescribed not only as the organizational prerequisite for power seizure but also as the cardinal principle of the emergent political order. Alliance in this context was given a specific meaning. To establish an alliance often meant, first and foremost, the amalgamation of mass organizations under a single and unified leadership; and second, the formation of a supposedly higher unity among the rebels and the veteran party cadres they attacked—embodied

by the authority of the so-called “revolutionary committee” as the new organ of power, as I will discuss shortly. Only the political role of the military needs to be added in order to complete this emerging formula, and this last piece was to be completed very soon.

On January 23, Mao ordered the army to intervene in the Cultural Revolution in the name of “supporting the Left” (*zhi zuo*). The PLA was instructed to “assist power seizures carried out by the revolutionary leftists” and “mercilessly suppress reactionary groups,” but the criteria for determining what constituted revolutionary, leftist, and reactionary remained undefined.¹¹⁷ On the same day, the CCP Central Committee ordered that “when the proletarian revolutionaries are still unable to control the situation and PLA protection is called for, the PLA must immediately enforce military control.”¹¹⁸ To call for the PLA to aid power seizures in the face of bureaucratic opposition was disingenuous, to say the best. Although a great many local bureaucrats initially resisted rebel attacks, most such opposition collapsed as soon as the central leadership withdrew support. Rather, the greatest danger that necessitated active PLA intervention came from the breakdown of political and economic order and the growing divisions within the mass movement. As Mao acknowledged in July 1967: “At that time neither the party nor the government was working. Only the PLA was able to do its job.”¹¹⁹ Acting as “a sort of fire brigade,”¹²⁰ the PLA was called into service to take control of communication and transportation facilities, supervise political stabilization and economic production, and conduct ideological education. This was exemplified in the policy of “three supports and two militaries” (*san zhi liang jun*), promulgated in March 1967, which prescribed the roles of the PLA as “support the left, support industrial production, support agricultural production,” and “exercise military control and conduct military training.”¹²¹ A *Red Flag* article stipulated that PLA and militia representatives must be sent to “factories, rural communes, finance and trade, cultural and educational units, and party and state agencies. . . . If there is a temporary shortage of military personnel, the vacancy may be filled in the future.”¹²² In the next few weeks, supplementary directives were issued to shield the military from turmoil by prohibiting power seizures “carried out from below” except in military academies, art and propaganda troupes, athletic teams, and hospitals.¹²³ Although the wording of these orders was ambiguous, their general thrust, as MacFarquhar and Schoenhals note, was decidedly “in the direction of imposing law and order.”¹²⁴

With the PLA’s supervisory role declared, the meaning of the great alliance was further clarified. The idea of the so-called triple alliance or “three-in-one combination” (*sanjiehe*) first appeared in the *People’s Daily*

on February 10, which extolled rebels in Heilongjiang for “uniting with cadres loyal to Chairman Mao’s correct line, and with PLA officers.”¹²⁵ It was soon elaborated and generalized into a national policy model for establishing the revolutionary committee as the “revolutionary provisional organ of power with proletarian authority.”¹²⁶ The revolutionary committees, as Dong Guoqiang and Andrew Walder observed in their case study of the province of Jiangsu, “were the most important change in the Chinese state to emerge during the Cultural Revolution.”¹²⁷ In joining such disparate elements as army officers, rebel representatives, and veteran party cadres in an uneasy political combination increasingly dominated by the military, the revolutionary committee was to become the main model for constituting the new organ of power and rebuilding the political order.

In early 1967, militant Paris Commune rhetoric continued to be prominently espoused, as it had been since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.¹²⁸ The new revolutionary committees, however, were hardly the “permanent mass organizations” instituted by “a system of general elections” originally promised in the Sixteen Points.¹²⁹ Rather, they were mostly dominated by PLA officers. The decision whether a provincial revolutionary committee met the criteria for forming a three-in-one combination was always made by the highest authority. As for the army’s role, Mao did not call on the army to impose order by force, but in a chaotic situation where the party had virtually ceased to function, it was inevitable that the army—the most disciplinarian of all state apparatuses—came to play a central role. In those regions where new organs of power in the form of revolutionary committees were deemed not yet suitable, Beijing decreed military control commissions—virtually a form of military government—to enforce military administration, which usually were followed by preparatory or provisional revolutionary committees, similarly supervised by PLA personnel. When Kang Sheng, the adviser to the CCRG, was asked to specify precisely what “military control” (*jun guan*) meant, he replied bluntly, “Military control is autocratic rule. You obey me in everything. You put out a public notice in which you announce you obey me.”¹³⁰ In March 1967, Premier Zhou Enlai disclosed that nearly 7,000 agencies nationwide were under military control, including newspapers and broadcasting stations, police bureaus, postal offices, banks, warehouses, and industrial enterprises. Ten of the twenty-nine provinces were under military control. Dissatisfied with the slow pace of forming revolutionary committees, Zhou remarked that the driving force behind the process of reestablishing new power organs “could not be the revolutionary mass organizations only”; rather, “according to Chairman Mao, there should be absolutely no doubt that the chief driving force should be the

People's Liberation Army."¹³¹ The PLA was to become the most powerful force in shaping the course of the movement, thereby initiating the unmistakable national tendency toward what Roderick MacFarquhar aptly calls the "militarization of Chinese politics" during the Cultural Revolution.¹³²

In conjunction with PLA intervention, a battle was declared against all sorts of deviant political tendencies, such as "ultrademocracy," "economism," "small-group mentality," "sectarianism," "splitism," "anarchism," and "individualism," among others. Official media repeatedly promoted "proletarian party character," "rigorous organizational discipline," and "unity."¹³³ Such themes were expressed in the official prescription regarding the "correct theory, principles, and policies" of power seizure.¹³⁴ Although these statements reflected considerable ambiguities, they revealed clearly which way the political wind was blowing. They stipulated that although rebellion was still justified, the new organs of power must enforce "revolutionary discipline," combining "the most extensive democracy" with "the highest degree of centralism." Stressing the need to defeat deviant tendencies, these declarations emphasized the importance of establishing the authority of "provisional organs of power." One statement concluded solemnly, "We must bear in mind the lesson that the Paris Commune was only too restrained in the use of its authority."¹³⁵

The formation of the Shanghai Commune in early February 1967 marked the birth of the new power structure in the city and took the January Revolution to its symbolic climax. At a mass rally on February 5, the nameplate of the municipal government was smashed and burned and replaced with the plate of the Shanghai People's Commune.¹³⁶ The inaugural declaration of the Commune reaffirmed an apparently radical vision. The Commune, according to the statement, "opened up a new stage of the Shanghai working people holding their destiny in their own hands" by creating "a new form of local state organ" that would carry out "the most extensive proletarian democracy among the people."¹³⁷ However, despite the radical imagery the Commune conjured up, reportedly half of the city's rebels stood defiantly outside at the time of its inauguration.¹³⁸ Headed by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan, and with only a selective federation of Shanghai's mass groups incorporated as its backbone (the economic elements being duly excluded), the Shanghai Commune came into being amid pervasive conflicts. Marking the beginning of the more aggressive use of force, the Commune relied heavily on the PLA because its political survival was continually threatened by opposition. The inauguration of the Commune was filled with threats directed at the opposition. Zhang Chunqiao claimed that "class enemies will use all sorts of insidious tricks and schemes to create difficulties for the Shanghai People's Commune." "We have the mighty PLA standing on our side," he

declared, “and we will smash the dog’s head of anyone daring to carry out counterrevolutionary activities!”¹³⁹ The Commune’s first ordinance ordered the PLA and the police to “resolutely suppress active counterrevolutionaries who undermine the Great Cultural Revolution, the Shanghai People’s Commune, and the socialist economy.”¹⁴⁰

All the exuberance and radical rhetoric notwithstanding, the effort to establish the Commune in Shanghai was soon quashed by none other than Mao himself, who became attracted to a different political model. After the founding of the Shanghai Commune on February 5, there was no immediate reaction from Beijing. For over two weeks, there was no news in the *People’s Daily*, so the new entity in Shanghai was kept in suspense. Xu Jingxian, a key figure in Shanghai’s January episode, recollected:

We waited and waited, for three or four days in a row, and we didn’t see the New China News Agency release any news, nor did the *People’s Daily* carry any story. Only the local papers such as the *Wen Hui Daily* and *Liberation Daily* were churning out stories every day. As a result, rumors began to spread: “The Center has not approved us because the ‘three-in-one combination’ principle has not been implemented in Shanghai.” “Chairman Mao doesn’t approve the appointment of Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan as leaders of the Shanghai Commune, therefore no news has been released.” . . . I asked Zhang and Yao: “After the power seizure in Heilongjiang, the *People’s Daily* immediately carried the news and published an editorial to congratulate the birth of the Provincial Red Rebels’ Revolutionary Committee, and the story was reported throughout the country. Why is the news about the founding of the Shanghai People’s Commune not released?” Neither of them could answer my question.¹⁴¹

Beijing’s silence, however, signaled Mao’s subtle shift at a crucial moment of the Cultural Revolution. On February 12, Mao summoned Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan to Beijing. During three meetings with his Shanghai envoys between February 12 and February 18, Mao expressed apprehensions about the course of the Cultural Revolution: “The Cultural Revolution will eventually have to end, even after one year or two. Now there are people who advocate ‘overthrowing all.’ If all the cadres are overthrown, then what do we do? ‘Doubt everything, overthrow everything’ [*buaiyi yiqie, dadao yiqie*]—it is anarchism through and through.” “We can surely promote workers and students and let them exercise political power. But since they have had no administrative experience, the situation is going to deteriorate. It’s going to be very unstable.”¹⁴²

In conversations with Zhang and Yao, Mao warned of the “anarchical tendencies” emerging in the Cultural Revolution—particularly the idea that all official positions of authority should be eliminated—and called

such views “most reactionary.” Mao was especially concerned that the commune, even if it was one in name and rhetoric only, could further undermine the authority of the party. “If the whole of China sets up people’s communes,” Mao wondered, “then what do we do with the party, the state, and the army? Who will administer the state affairs?”¹⁴³ “If every province, city, and region were called a people’s commune, we’d have to change the name of our country from People’s Republic of China to People’s Commune of China. . . . Then what about the party? Where would we place the party? Where would we place the party committee? There must be a party somehow! There must be a nucleus, no matter what we call it.”¹⁴⁴ Mao’s displeasure with the bureaucratized CCP notwithstanding, when the threat to its very existence became acute, Mao reaffirmed his commitment to the vanguard party and reiterated its dominant position. As Stuart Schram remarks, “Mao was forced to choose between Leninism and anarchy. He had no hesitation in preferring the former.”¹⁴⁵

A week after Mao’s meetings with Zhang and Yao, Beijing officially banned the use of the word “commune” in naming new power organs at national and local levels. It decreed that the formation of new political organs after power seizures must be reported to the central leadership, which alone had the authority to ratify them, and news coverage must be subject to approval.¹⁴⁶ Back in Shanghai, Zhang Chunqiao announced that the city’s new power organ would abandon the name “commune,” and he refuted those who argued that “we can do without leading cadres” in unambiguously Leninist logic:

Would it be possible not to have revolutionary leading cadres? It is impossible. Because the masses, as long as they take revolutionary action, must be led by cadres. For example, in a rebel organization, or a fighting group, there must be a responsible person. No matter what names we use . . . it does not matter. The point is that there must be a leadership, so there must be cadres. . . . Why do we need cadres who have assumed leadership positions before? The reason for this is very simple. For example, some workers may be very good, and they may perform their job very well. They dare to break through and rebel; they are able and have made great contributions to the Cultural Revolution. But if we turn over to such workers a city like Shanghai or a province such as Jiangsu, then they would find it very difficult to manage because of their lack of experience. They may be able to manage a workshop, but it may be difficult for them to manage a large factory. And it will be a lot more difficult if we turn over to them the whole city of Shanghai. The rationale behind this is really very simple and needs no further elaboration.¹⁴⁷

On February 24, after existing for only nineteen days with much fanfare, the Shanghai People’s Commune was unceremoniously converted into the



Figure 4. Shanghai's January Revolution. From *China Pictorial*, no. 11 (1967).

Revolutionary Committee of Shanghai. The exalted principles of the Paris Commune evaporated into the void (see Figure 4).

An Unstable Closure

Along with the efforts to rebuild new organs of political authority, a spate of stabilization measures were undertaken to combat the worsening political and economic situation. The army and the police were deployed to prevent the public from withdrawing money from banks, and department stores in major cities were closed in an effort to halt the sale of consumer goods. Workers were urged to strengthen labor discipline, and a nationwide moratorium was declared on back wages, bonuses, and other allowances. Rusticates who returned to the cities were ordered to

report to their rural posts immediately. Peasants were urged to resume production, and a Central Committee directive stipulated that there were to be no power seizures in rural areas during the spring season. Organizations of temporary workers were outlawed, and their leaders were arrested.¹⁴⁸ The official holiday of the Lunar New Year was canceled to lessen the strain on the transportation system, as well as to reduce instability resulting from a massive movement of people. Nationwide, cross-regional and cross-occupational groups were banned, and Premier Zhou Enlai made the rationale clear at a meeting with Red Guard delegates in February 1967: “You must not draw people together from all over to set up independent nationwide, cross-provincial, or cross-regional organizations, because that would be tantamount to creating a political party.”¹⁴⁹ In contrast to the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, when expansion of mass mobilizations was encouraged, now Beijing’s priority was to prevent the communication and interactive amplification of locally and sectionally based conflicts, which, blocked from traveling horizontally, were forced to remain separate and to be bound by their immediate contexts.

In comparison with many localities where the collapse of authorities unleashed a torrent of violence, Shanghai’s path to political reintegration was relatively bloodless. The restoration of order, however, involved arduous work. In Shanghai, the process of recentralization began in February 1967 and continued until the fall, after the breakup of the last major opposition paved the way for the total dominance of the WGHQ. This protracted process was accompanied by much disruption and strife.

Dissensions quickly erupted within the rebel ranks, despite the fact that Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen held power in the city with Mao’s full support. As Perry and Li’s work details, the WGHQ was little more than a loose amalgam of groups from various factories. From its beginning, the WGHQ faced repeated challenges from its regiments (*bingtuan*), which ostensibly operated under its aegis but in reality remained largely autonomous. Soon after the collapse of the municipal government, several regiments attempted to break away. Among them, the Second Regiment, led by Geng Jinzhang, reportedly grew to over 500,000, posing a major threat to the city’s new center of power.

The crackdown on the unruly regiments began in January when Wang Hongwen declared that they were not allowed to take part in power seizures as independent entities.¹⁵⁰ On February 11, the WGHQ issued a proclamation to disband the regiments in the name of “maintaining organizational purity,” accusing regimental leaders of having “rivaled with the headquarters” and having “instigated splits and sectarianism.”¹⁵¹ The regi-

ments fought back. Geng Jinzhang threatened massive protests if his unit was not included in the Shanghai Commune. "We controlled no less than seven hundred municipal departments and four whole districts," he claimed, "but Zhang Chunqiao pretended that we didn't even exist."¹⁵² Resenting being excluded, the disgruntled regiments banded together to form the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebel Liaison Committee, with fourteen constituent groups. They claimed that "the Center is unaware of the formation of the Shanghai Commune. This indicates that Zhang Chunqiao may have problems."¹⁵³ The opposition soon expanded to include thirty-six groups and even announced a plan to form a New Shanghai Commune.¹⁵⁴ Beijing's initial reticence about the Shanghai Commune fueled the discontented elements. Geng Jinzhang reportedly remarked that "the Shanghai Commune was set up without the knowledge of Chairman Mao and the Central Cultural Revolution Group. That is why *People's Daily* has not mentioned it. This means one thing and one thing only: Chang Ch'un-ch'iao [Zhang Chunqiao] is suspect!" Geng declared open war on the WGHQ, as well as the Shanghai Commune: "So long as there is a Workers Headquarters, our Second Regiment cannot survive; and so long as there is a Second Regiment, Workers Headquarters cannot survive! We must close down their General Headquarters and their district branches; only then will the Shanghai Commune topple."¹⁵⁵ The regimental opposition, however, was crushed. With Mao's endorsement of Shanghai's new order, the WGHQ took immediate action to crush its opponents, mobilizing both its followers and the police force. The renegade regiments were dissolved, and many of their members were absorbed into the WGHQ.

The establishment of a new governing authority in the city notwithstanding, many of the socioeconomic grievances that had originally fueled the mass mobilization remained unresolved. The WGHQ's regimental dissensions were entangled with economic grievances that had erupted earlier. Geng Jinzhang's Second Regiment, for example, was well known to enjoy close ties with various economic elements. In one case, a large contingent of disgruntled rusticated workers returned to the city and was given free lodging at a hotel under Geng's control. The returnees occupied four entire floors for weeks, claiming that "we have no other place to go but to stay here. This is now our home." When the newly installed Municipal Revolutionary Committee sent a team to pressure them to "return to their original post and make revolution locally," twenty-eight team members were detained. The protesters reportedly declared that "only Chairman Mao can talk to us," and that "the Revolutionary Committee is a group of new power holders, which is even worse than the old party committee." Although WGHQ forces eventually drove them out, the tension was not resolved.

For over a week, the returnees encircled the hotel, “beating up public security personnel, detaining workers and students sent to investigate the truth, stirring up fights, and calling in their sympathizers from Jiangsu, Anhui, and other provinces to undermine revolution and production.” In late February, the rusticates’ group was declared a “counterrevolutionary group” engaging in economism and “attacking the state of proletarian dictatorship” and was disbanded.¹⁵⁶

The WGHQ’s suppression of its regiments did not end dissatisfactions in the city. To many, the revolutionary committees seemed to maintain many of the trappings of the pre-Cultural Revolution order. The WGHQ’s control of power, with Zhang Chunqiao as its head, looked like a sham because Zhang had not come to power through the will of the masses. Students, once allies of the WGHQ, became vocal opponents of the new authority. In January, posters appeared at Fudan University—the base of several major student groups—with such titles as “Shanghai Must Undergo Another Turmoil,” “Long Live the Revolutionary Spirit of ‘Doubting Everything,’” and “Resolutely Oppose the New Municipal Party Committee Headed by Zhang Chunqiao.” Skeptical students even sent investigators to Beijing to collect incriminating materials about Zhang’s political past.¹⁵⁷ A crisis erupted when the students seized Xu Jingxian, one of Zhang’s lieutenants. Zhang immediately ordered the Shanghai Garrison to dispatch an armed convoy to rescue him. This inflamed the students, and more anti-Zhang protests ensued. On January 29, however, an urgent cable from Beijing denounced the students’ action as “totally wrong,” praised the PLA’s action as “totally justified,” and threatened that “necessary action will be undertaken” if the students’ wrong course was not immediately rectified. In the face of Beijing’s strong reaction, the students’ opposition to Zhang quickly crumbled.¹⁵⁸

With the formation of the Municipal Revolutionary Committee, the city’s new center of power soon faced a more obstinate challenge from the Lian Si (variously translated as the Allied Command or United Headquarters), a rebel group based at the Shanghai Diesel Engine Factory. The Lian Si case exemplifies the complexity and fluidity of the mass politics characteristic of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵⁹ With a workforce of 10,000 and functioning as a major supplier of diesel engines, the plant had a close relationship with the Chinese navy, and many demobilized servicemen were assigned jobs at the factory, often as shop-level cadres. Most of these ex-soldiers were of red class categories, with good political credentials. They often carried over to civilian life their disciplinarian work style, characterized by ideological rigidity and unswerving obedience to superiors. Mostly from rural origins and northern provinces, they often had lower levels of

education; few had progressed beyond junior high school. By contrast, the majority of factory-level cadres were locals, many of whom had a college education and served in technical positions.

The conflicts among cadres at the Shanghai Diesel Engine Factory had a major impact on the development of mass factionalism. At the factory, the main division was between cadres from military and civilian backgrounds. Mostly lacking technical competence, ex-military cadres had an authoritarian style of management that often antagonized their local colleagues, who had little patience for the former's political slogans. More significantly, conflicts among cadres were compounded by antagonisms between cadres and workers. Workers' grievances at Shanghai Diesel derived mainly from two sources—discrimination against veteran workers with unclean political history and dissatisfaction among young workers. Because the factory was a key military-industrial enterprise that had once been controlled by the Kuomintang (KMT), many workers had become KMT members before 1949, recruited at mass ceremonies—often as a prerequisite to keep their job. After the founding of the PRC, these veteran workers' former KMT ties became a stigma and made them vulnerable in political campaigns, which were typically carried out by ex-soldier cadres. Such political stigmatization fomented deeply felt animosities among those who had been targeted. Younger workers also had abundant reason to be unhappy. The prevalent ideological ethos of “hard work and plain living”—as well as an intensification of political education centering on class struggle—depressed everyday life. Most of the young workers lived in the factory dormitory far removed from the city center, where recreational opportunities were rare. Bored and frustrated with their ascetic and highly regimented everyday life, some young workers posted inflammatory slogans, such as “We can't but feel ashamed that half a month's wage is barely enough to buy a pair of leather shoes!” “Our spring [of youth] has already lost its radiance!” “Let's hold dance parties at once!” and “Long live women!” Others scratched the English letters “KO” onto their leather belts. Perry and Li surmise that the “KO” insignia might have been intended as a playful pun on the English word “okay,” and in doing this, the young workers were merely searching for some means of self-expression. In the highly charged political atmosphere of the mid-1960s, however, the ultravigilant cadres construed the innocuous insignia as the secret code of some clandestine political organization, and an alleged “KO counterrevolutionary clique” was announced to have been uncovered.¹⁶⁰

At Shanghai Diesel, long-standing disputes among cadres became entangled with tensions among workers. In late 1966, the factory was split into two opposing factions: the East Is Red Headquarters, with 2,300

members, and the Shanghai Diesel Revolutionary Rebel Allied Command, colloquially known as the Lian Si, which initially had 3,000 members but soon grew to over 5,000. The majority of shop-level cadres of military background, as well as party members and political activists, supported the East Is Red, while the Lian Si drew support from workers with socio-economic and political grievances, who resented the workshop cadres.

The two factions hurled the disparaging epithet “old conservative” (*lao bao*) against each other, perhaps each with some justification. According to conventional scholarly wisdom, the social composition of the Lian Si qualified the group as “rebel” because it drew supporters mainly from disgruntled workers and challenged the authority of shop-level cadres.¹⁶¹ Contingent events, however, plunged the group into a swiftly shifting political field that exceeded the determination of its social composition. The group inadvertently committed several blunders. To strengthen its position, the Lian Si tried to affiliate with the WGHQ. However, its rival had beaten it by only a few days. Failing to gain the WGHQ’s support, it then turned to the Scarlet Guards, the WGHQ’s archrival. After the Scarlet Guards collapsed, the Lian Si managed to affiliate itself with a district branch of the WGHQ. As it turned out, this branch was not under Wang Hongwen’s direct control and was soon eliminated when Wang moved to consolidate his position. In desperation, Lian Si members daringly forced their way into Zhang Chunqiao’s residence to request a special meeting. The next day, the incident was dramatized as “Lian Si terrorists attack Comrade Zhang Chunqiao’s home.”¹⁶²

This alleged attack on Zhang escalated conflicts at Shanghai Diesel. The East Is Red pleaded for assistance from the WGHQ, and Wang Hongwen promptly complied. The taking of the East Is Red under the WGHQ’s protection transformed a conflict between rivals within a particular plant into a battle between the Lian Si and the WGHQ-led coalition that took on a larger, citywide significance. In late February, the Lian Si escalated its opposition by expanding its operation beyond the factory walls through the formation of hundreds of Liaison Posts for Supporting the Lian Si (*zhilian zhan*) all over the city to gather support for its cause.¹⁶³ As many as 647 such liaison posts were formed between April and June 1967.¹⁶⁴ The mushrooming support posts represented a major realignment of mass politics in the city. Now that a new organizational umbrella was available, groups that had held grudges against the WGHQ and Zhang Chunqiao—worker groups disbanded by Wang Hongwen, students excluded from the Shanghai Commune, and disgruntled ordinary citizens—all joined forces to contest the WGHQ’s dominant position. The Lian Si episode escalated from a factional conflict within a factory to a broader conflict between a coalition of dis-

gruntled elements and the WGHQ, which enjoyed the support of the new-found Municipal Revolutionary Committee. A key Lian Si leader later recalled: "By March and April of 1967, the situation in Shanghai had changed greatly. The old party committees had all but collapsed, and the new Municipal Revolutionary Committee was in control. The WGHQ, backed by the Municipal Revolutionary Committee, treated the other rebel organizations badly. We didn't like the way we were treated and felt we were bullied. People said we were bombarding the revolutionary committee. Yes indeed! With the revolutionary committee oppressing the masses, we had to defend ourselves by launching a counteroffensive."¹⁶⁵

The stakes of the Lian Si's challenge to the city's new center of power were well understood by its foes, as Wang Hongwen noted:

The Shanghai Diesel Engine Factory Lian Si and the support-Lian Si posts emerged in opposition to the newly born revolutionary committee and our WGH. They wanted to destroy the revolutionary committee and the WGH and establish a second workers' organization to replace the WGH and seize power from the municipal revolutionary committee. The support posts were the product of the reactionary theory of multiple centers [*duo zhongxin lun*] and they advocated redistribution of power. This was ultra-leftism. The leaders of the support posts wanted to create major chaos in Shanghai, during which they would seize power from the revolutionary committee. Had we permitted the liaison posts and Lian Si to develop, it would have been very hard to deal with.¹⁶⁶

As tensions escalated, the WGHQ began to prepare for action. The general assault was launched on August 4, 1967, when over 100,000 WGHQ fighters encircled the factory, attacking with spears, iron bars, catapults, high-pressure water hoses, and homemade Molotov bombs. When it all ended, nearly 1,000 had been injured, and 18 had died.¹⁶⁷ After the assault, WGHQ forces proceeded to sweep the city, dismantling the network of Lian Si supporters and eliminating other residual opposition and rival groups.

The suppression of the Lian Si marked the end of organized opposition in the city. By late 1967, according to a post-Mao party history, "the curtain of the once boisterous Red Guard movement had finally dropped."¹⁶⁸ Residual elements of resistance, however, continued in semiunderground circles. Some of the Red Guards who had taken part in the anti-Zhang movement formed clandestine study groups that debated such questions as "whether the Cultural Revolution is actually a political power struggle" and "whether the Red Guards were simply the instrument manipulated by the CCRG." One such group, the Anti-restoration Study Association, published its manifesto on August 5, incidentally, one day after the suppression of the Lian Si rebels. Although no local developments were manifestly

discussed, the text nevertheless raised a number of issues germane not only to the recent events in Shanghai but also to the Cultural Revolution as a whole. Great stress was put on building the relationship between the student movement and a broader array of social forces. Implicitly going against Beijing's policy that increasingly favored the regimented industrial workers and sidelined the unruly student movement, the statement called for a close integration of students, workers, and other social groups in the Cultural Revolution.¹⁶⁹ In a speech delivered in January 1968, Wang Shao-yong, a veteran party official and member of the Municipal Revolutionary Committee, acknowledged that the "proletarian authority" of revolutionary committees in the city had been undermined by widespread criticisms and attacks by people who felt that "everything remains the same after the establishment of the revolutionary committee—the same old people, old leading body, old style of work, and old way of conducting business."¹⁷⁰ Such discontent and grievances led to renewed challenges to Shanghai's newly constituted center of power. In April 1968, for example, discontented university and middle-school students made a second attempt to challenge Zhang Chunqiao and the new municipal authority he represented. Employing political tactics and rhetoric familiar in the Cultural Revolution, the students claimed that they had unearthed incriminating evidence of Zhang's association with the KMT and betrayal of the CCP in the 1930s and called for his removal in order for "the Cultural Revolution to be carried out to the end." The quick thwarting of this last-ditch effort marked the full closure of mass turbulence in Shanghai.¹⁷¹

In the Name of Proletarian Power

Early 1967 was undoubtedly a critical juncture. Narrated retroactively as the January Revolution, the months of January and February closed with the elaboration of a number of policy formulations generalized from experiences in Shanghai. The January Revolution, which was to become the new *modus operandi* of the Cultural Revolution during the coming months, took on a tangible shape. By late February, most of the key components of this new paradigm—power seizure by officially approved mass organizations, formation of great alliances, suppression of economic activities, intervention by the PLA, and creation of new power organs—were already in place. By the spring of 1967, Shanghai was again functioning in a more or less normal administrative fashion, despite widespread resistance and the fact that the whole process of the return to normalcy was

embellished with abundant revolutionary rhetoric. “The workers in Shanghai are good,” remarked Mao during his stay in Shanghai during the summer of 1967. “As for the situation in Shanghai, the Party Center can rest at ease [*fangxin*].”¹⁷² After watching film footage of WGHQ fighters descending on Shanghai Diesel to break the last stronghold of resistance, Mao reportedly commended Wang Hongwen, “You fought a victorious battle, your action stabilized Shanghai.”¹⁷³

Using both previously existing and newly available materials, in this chapter I argue that a careful examination of popular socioeconomic struggles in late 1966 is crucial for the grounding of an alternative account of the January Revolution. In their groundbreaking book *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution*, Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun argued against the prevailing view that mass organizations that emerged in the Cultural Revolution were “little more than elite-sponsored instruments,” and that the masses “gained nothing but further repression.”¹⁷⁴ Although Perry and Li acknowledged that most mass organizations were dissolved only two and a half years after the start of the Cultural Revolution, they highlighted the “extraordinary influence” of worker rebels in Shanghai and concluded: “Unlike the situation in other cities, in Shanghai the rebels retained—and improved—their political standing well after the army had wrested control from mass organizations across most of the country. . . . Rebel domination, in turn, dampened the flames of factional strife that led to scenes of mass violence in so much of the country. In Shanghai, after the January Revolution . . . the worker rebels spoke with decisive voice in municipal politics.”¹⁷⁵ Although I have no quarrel with Perry and Li’s emphasis on the different patterns of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai and the rest of the country, my interpretation of these differences partially diverges from theirs. As I have argued, the early weeks of January constituted a critical juncture in which the interplay of local and national politics produced highly significant political developments, through which fragmented experiences were sifted and lifted out of their local contexts, appropriated, and strategically transformed. Constituting a contradictory moment in which all at once eruption and containment, rebellion and order, and revolution and restoration were closely intertwined, the January Revolution marked in a crucial sense the beginning of the end in Shanghai of the mass politics characteristic of the Cultural Revolution. It constituted, in fact, one of the earliest instances of successful restoration of order, a difficult task that would not be accomplished in the rest of the country for another twenty months, and even then often with much violence and with significant intervention from the Chinese military. In Shanghai, the recentralization of local political power was carried

out through the absorption of the city's largest and most powerful rebel group, the WGHQ, into the newly created structure of political authority. The WGHQ's numerical strength and its dominant position enabled it to become the effective instrument for enforcing discipline and suppressing the unruly elements.

The pervasive labor grievances that exploded and were suppressed in Shanghai were expressive of systemic inequalities and tensions inherent in China's state-socialist order. Although the specter of economism in Shanghai did not achieve more durable forms of organization and mobilization and failed to crystallize into more articulate ideological positions, this did not make it any less subversive. The dangers of January, indeed, pertain crucially to the meaning of Rosa Luxemburg's concept of the "mass strike." The dynamic unity between economic and political struggles, according to Luxemburg, is a consequence of the movement of feedback and interaction, which tends to "over-leap the bounds" in concrete situations.¹⁷⁶ At a ruptural moment, economic struggles grow into political ones, and vice versa. "In a revolutionary situation," as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe write, evidently in the spirit of Luxemburg, "the meaning of every mobilization appears, so to speak, split: aside from its specific literal demands, each mobilization represents the revolutionary situation as a whole; and these totalizing effects are visible in the overdetermination of some struggles by others."¹⁷⁷

In summary, the January Revolution in Shanghai was a disturbing moment both to those who believed that workers had transgressed proper boundaries and to those who felt that the workers had been betrayed. That the Maoist leadership considered economism and its suppression the central political issue can hardly be mistaken. The suppression of economism, however, involved not only outright use of force but also more subtle tactics of incorporation and rechanneling; more important, it also involved the erection of an arbitrary barrier between narrowly defined political struggle (rebellion) and socioeconomic demands (economism). In severing and obscuring connections between different dimensions of popular struggles, the Shanghai episode constituted a strategic moment in which the emergence of a powerful critique of the system as a whole was forestalled. The political and ideological effects of this separation were twofold: while popular demands came to be depoliticized as selfish, private behavior, rebellion or power seizure was simultaneously deprived of concrete material content, and its political significance was thereby neutered. As I argue in this book, various forms of such a critique of the established system that highlighted different aspects of popular struggles were articulated during the Cultural Revolution by critics who creatively reinterpreted and transgressed the Maoist ideology.

In Chapter 5, I will examine the Shengwulian episode in the central-southern province of Hunan, where the Cultural Revolution's increasingly unmistakable shift of course toward mass demobilization and institutional rebuilding encountered energetic resistance from various recalcitrant elements, fueled by both endemic factional battles and deeply entrenched social and political antagonisms and amplified by emergent political ideas that granted new meanings to the ongoing conflicts.

REVOLUTION IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION

Popular Radicalization of the Cultural Revolution in Hunan

WITH STRONG SUPPORT from the central authorities, the January Revolution in Shanghai resulted in political reintegration and the restoration of order. Its national impact, however, was highly uneven. The radical rhetoric of the masses seizing power from “a handful of power holders in the party who take the capitalist road” inspired numerous rebel attacks on the political authorities. The precipitous collapse of local party and government organs in many parts of the country dramatically transformed the field of political action by injecting a new, unpredictable dynamics into a surging mass movement. By authorizing the masses to rebel against bourgeois representatives in the party, and by asserting that the people should obey only Mao and his highly elusive Thought, the Maoist leadership stripped the party organizations of their formerly supreme authority but did not provide viable alternative structures in their place. After January 1967, rebels across the country were suddenly and directly drawn into the tumultuous political process with little previous experience, and new contentions and antagonisms emerged to violently divide a largely disorganized mass movement.

The Shanghai model of combining mass power seizures with the formation of great alliances and revolutionary committees, however, was difficult to replicate in many parts of the country. “The key ingredients of the Shanghai formula proved elusive,” Dong Guoqiang and Andrew Walder argue in their analysis of the January events and their aftermath in the

province of Jiangsu,¹ such as Mao's backing of a new local leader and unification of rebel forces under politically reliable leadership obedient to Beijing. The rampant mass factional conflicts in the midst of nationwide political and economic breakdown prompted the central leadership, itself often divided, to turn toward a more moderate policy of lenient treatment of cadres under attack, restoration of local political authority by forming revolutionary committees, and mobilization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to maintain discipline and order. In a chaotic and violent situation in which the party and state apparatus had largely ceased to function, the army came to play an instrumental role in shaping the course of the Cultural Revolution. However, the dual mandate of the PLA—both to maintain discipline and ostensibly to facilitate a mass revolutionary movement—was fraught with dangers. On the one hand, it was often difficult, if not impossible, to identify genuine rebels or revolutionary leftists in situations in which a multitude of mass groups competed to be the truest followers of Mao. On the other hand, the army's professional penchant for discipline and order often inclined it to develop close relationships with civilian bureaucrats. These factors caused frequent conflicts between army units and many disobedient rebels.

These conflicts culminated in the Wuhan Incident in July 1967, a watershed event that was, in the words of Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, "the most spectacular uprising against the Cultural Revolution" conducted by the PLA, and "potentially the most threatening."² After the swift suppression of the army's insubordination, a palpably irritated Mao first reacted by calling for "arming the Left" to counter military and civilian-bureaucratic resistance. This led to a brief upsurge of activism by rebels emboldened by the Central Cultural Revolution Group's (CCRG's) call to strike down the "capitalist roaders in the army"³ that further worsened hostile mass reactions against the PLA. The notion that there might be revisionists within the army was not new, but now, as the army's authority declined, it took on explosive consequences. In the following weeks, rebels throughout the country seized weapons and attacked the army and its supporters, threatening to tear apart the PLA in the same way in which the Cultural Revolution had wrecked the party and state bureaucracies. The country seemed to be sliding into total chaos, as Mao later admitted: "Everywhere people were fighting, dividing into two factions. There were two factions in every factory, in every school, in every province, and in every county. . . . The entire country was in great turmoil [*tianxia daluan le*]."⁴ The mood of despair was disclosed in Premier Zhou Enlai's conversation with Shirley Graham, the widow of the American civil rights activist W. E. B. DuBois: "The whole Chinese Revolution may go

down to defeat for a while. We may lose everything. But never mind. If we are defeated here, you in Africa will learn from our mistakes, and you will develop your own Mao Zedong, and you will learn to do it better. And so in the end, we shall succeed.”⁵

During the turbulent summer of 1967, Mao and the leaders around him were confronted with grave dangers: increasing mass attacks on the military and numerous factional fights that, in many areas, verged on all-out civil war. It is noteworthy that the Chairman’s assessment of the Cultural Revolution underwent conspicuous changes. “The disorders are not a calamity,” Mao assured a group of African visitors in mid-May 1967; “first, the sky will not collapse; second, the grass and trees on the mountains will continue to grow as before; if you refuse to believe, just go up there and you will see; third, fish will continue to swim in the rivers; and fourth, women will continue to give birth to babies.”⁶ As late as mid-July, before his departure for a ten-week tour of the provinces, Mao addressed a gathering of senior PLA officers in a rather optimistic tone: “Let’s not be afraid of people causing trouble. The bigger the trouble gets, the longer it lasts, the better. Trouble again and again, on and on—something will come out of it! . . . Major trouble across all of China is not going to happen.”⁷ But before his return to Beijing in late September, Mao seemed to have concluded that to continue the course of the movement was to court disaster. “The car will overturn if it runs too fast,” Mao warned. “It is therefore necessary to be cautious.” “What we must principally accomplish now,” he urged, “is the great alliance and the three-way combination. Find the bad people, and the bulls and monsters. The party organization must be restored; party congresses at all levels should be convened.”⁸ Mao issued a number of directives during his tour, particularly about achieving great alliances and rehabilitating party and state cadres. “The capitalist roaders,” Mao stressed, “are only a very small number. . . . The majority of cadres must be rehabilitated and be allowed to resume their work.”⁹ Dismayed by a conflict-ridden country, Mao expressed impatience about the pace of political rebuilding. By August 1967, only seven of the twenty-nine provinces and provincial-level regions had established revolutionary committees. Mao set the end of 1967 as the target date for the formation of ten more such bodies and decreed that by the Chinese New Year in February 1968 the entire country must achieve a great alliance and consolidation of the new structure of power. “The Cultural Revolution is going to last for three years. The first year for launching, the second year for achieving success, and the third year for wrapping up.”¹⁰ Significantly, one of the first actions undertaken after Mao’s shift of mind was the purge of several of his closest aides and key members of the CCRG, all accused of “wrecking the Great Cultural Revolution.”¹¹ From

this moment on, despite all sorts of continuing radical extravagance, it became clear that the Cultural Revolution's mass movement was entering its final phase.

The Great Retreat and Its Discontents

In a dramatic gesture on September 5, 1967, China's highest political and military leaderships solemnly issued a decree, signed by Mao himself, to revive the tattering authority of the People's Liberation Army, now authorized to use force for self-defense in its effort to end factional conflicts and restore order. Battling mass groups were ordered to obey the authority of the PLA.¹² That the military was deemed politically central was symbolically demonstrated at the National Day celebration on October 1 when many of the generals denounced in earlier months (conspicuously General Chen Zaidao, the purported military ringleader in Wuhan) stood prominently alongside Mao, saluted by half a million parading students and soldiers.¹³ The trend of rebuilding the party and state apparatus with the aid of the military first began in early 1967, as I discussed in Chapter 4. But by the fall, the process of herding the genies back into the bottle, whether by enticement or by coercion, had become increasingly visible.

Clearly, the situation of the Red Guard movement was becoming precarious. Once Mao's ardent followers, the rebels were increasingly viewed as a liability. At a meeting with Red Guard delegates on September 17, 1967, Zhou Enlai and Jiang Qing disclosed Mao's recent warning that "the time has now come when the 'young revolutionary generals' will make mistakes."¹⁴ Students were ordered to cease "revolutionary link-up" and immediately return to schools, to "resume classes while carrying out the revolution" (*fuke nao geming*), and to "make revolution locally" (*jiudi nao geming*).¹⁵ In contrast to the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, when expansion of mass activism had been encouraged, the priority now was to prevent the communication and interactive amplification of locally and sectionally based conflicts. Schools were organized on a semimilitary basis with brigades, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads, and military personnel served as political instructors. The termination of Red Guard travel, which had contributed much to the volatility of the Cultural Revolution's mass politics, had been decreed repeatedly throughout 1967, but those orders had been largely ineffectual.¹⁶ This time, the army's participation added the real muscle needed.

Beginning in September 1967—over a year after the Red Guard movement was launched—clear signs emerged of a national tendency toward

retrenchment. China scholars have widely noted the Cultural Revolution's turn toward demobilization. As Maurice Meisner put it, the process that began in the fall of 1967 constituted the "Thermidor of the Cultural Revolution."¹⁷ Beginning from late 1967, wrote Marc Blecher, Mao "moved decisively to restore order. . . . Throughout 1968 the mass movements sputtered and the leadership moved to consolidate the situation."¹⁸ According to Hong Yung Lee, such events signaled political "moderation" and "de-escalation": "With Mao firmly backing a policy of retrenchment, . . . it had become obvious that the mass mobilization would soon end."¹⁹ And, in the view of Harry Harding, the events of late 1967 "shifted the focus of the Cultural Revolution from the destruction of the old political order to the creation of a new one. . . . When forced to choose between the mass movement and the PLA—between continued disorder and the only hope for political stability—Mao selected the latter."²⁰ These processes of demobilization and return to normalcy were difficult and protracted, but they proceeded, in Meisner's words, "with an inexorable logic, which dictated that the political power that had fallen to the army would eventually pass to a revived and refurbished Communist Party."²¹

In this nationwide milieu, the province of Hunan stood out as an exception. In Hunan, coincidentally Mao's home province, the relationship between Maoist leaders and the rebel movements they unleashed took on new complexities, and one of the best-known cases of intransigent rebels defying the trend toward demobilization appeared. Formed in late 1967, the Shengwulian (the acronym for the Hunan Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee) became known not only for its opposition to the new local authority installed by Beijing but also for the efforts of some of its activists to creatively reinterpret the official doctrine of the Cultural Revolution. Invoking the Paris Commune as the historical example of popular power, they claimed that what they called China's "new bureaucratic bourgeoisie" would have to be destroyed in order to establish a genuinely egalitarian society. The development of the Shengwulian was illustrative of the dynamic process of what anthropologist Stanley Tambiah called "parochialization," in which nationally significant conflicts are conditioned by local political cleavages and became concretized in accordance with their local contingencies.²²

The Shengwulian episode signaled the significant political divergences that were in the making during the Cultural Revolution—that is, the appearance of a self-styled ultraleft that defied the national trend toward demobilization. It became well known for the attempts by some of its activists to reinterpret and challenge the official doctrine of the Cultural Revolution. Wang Shaoguang, for example, described the critical ideas as-

sociated with the Shengwulian as marking the “mature stage” of the dissident ideological trends that emerged in the Cultural Revolution.²³ Richard Kraus considered its activities the “boldest attempt” to move beyond Maoism. The tone of the group, in his words, “was one of frustration at the limitations of the Cultural Revolution, which the Shengwulian faulted for holding back from a structural solution to China’s political problems.”²⁴ Meisner similarly portrayed the group as “one of the most critically radical and theoretically sophisticated organizations produced by the Cultural Revolution”:

The Shengwulian combined the original ideals of the Cultural Revolution with the theory of a new bureaucratic ruling class, a notion Mao had briefly entertained but abandoned. . . . They praised the Cultural Revolution for having awakened the masses and for having stimulated popular democracy but criticized its leaders’ proclivity to attack individuals instead of searching for the social class roots of China’s social and political problem. They found these roots in China’s “new bureaucratic bourgeoisie,” which still controlled the old state machine and had usurped the power of the new revolutionary committees. Their proposed remedy was “smashing” the existing state apparatus in favor of a “People’s Commune of China” based on the popular democratic principles of the Paris Commune. The Shengwulian, or at least its leaders, were radical Maoists—but too radical for Mao in 1968.²⁵

Relentlessly attacked by the Maoist leadership, the heterodox ideas that originated in Hunan spread beyond their local settings and aroused wider interest both elsewhere in China and in the West.

In spite of its fame and historical importance, the Shengwulian rarely appears in general accounts of the Cultural Revolution, either in English or in Chinese.²⁶ Except for Jonathan Unger’s pioneering study of the life and activities of Yang Xiguang, the author of the pivotal text that made the group famous,²⁷ serious scholarly treatments of the Shengwulian episode have been lacking. It is also notable that existing scholarly wisdom seems to be based on several inaccurate premises. First, the Shengwulian is typically understood as either a group or some sort of supergroup consisting of a number of affiliated bodies with a relatively clear organizational identity and structure. Second, it is often assumed that the social base of the group can be more or less reliably discerned. The origins of Red Guard factionalism that resulted in the rise of the Shengwulian have been traced to the social cleavages in Chinese society before the Cultural Revolution. For example, according to Unger, the group represented the collective endeavor of the “political have-nots” as the umbrella organization of “more than twenty loosely affiliated organizations, each with its own particular grievances.”²⁸ Third, the ultraleftist viewpoints provocatively articulated

by Yang Xiguang and his comrades have usually been taken to represent the Shengwulian group as a whole, and Yang's text is viewed as the political program or the manifesto of the Shengwulian. Last, in assuming such straightforward and unproblematic relationships among the organization, its social base, and the ultraleftist ideas, scholars have conventionally focused on Yang and his comrades' unorthodox political ideas while paying less attention to the complex historical circumstances in which they emerged. "The tortuous politics of the Chinese ultra-left," as Kraus characteristically wrote, "are of less interest than the relationship between the ideas of Shengwulian and the Maoist political leadership which condemned them."²⁹

In this chapter, I reexamine the Shengwulian, aiming to subject the Hunanese organization, its social base, and the ultraleftist ideas to closer scrutiny. I argue that the development of heterodox ideas was a historical event precipitated by new social conditions and unforeseen political circumstances. In divergence from the conventional view of the Shengwulian episode as mainly a matter of ideological development, this chapter is based on the premise that theoretical ideas emerge from a context of pragmatic actions rather than contemplatively as disembodied knowledge. In the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the rise and fall of the Shengwulian, with a focus on how nationally significant issues, in radiating out from the political center, played themselves out in relation to local contingencies, rifts, and complexes of power relations.

Resisting Demobilization: The Road to the Shengwulian

In Hunan, the Cultural Revolution began in early June 1966 with top-down, party-led attacks on so-called "reactionary academic authorities" and "antiparty elements."³⁰ A small number of students, however, turned their attention to scrutinizing and challenging party branches and cadres. At Hunan University, students put up posters in June that criticized the party branches in the name of Mao Zedong Thought. Local party leaders reacted quickly by dispatching work teams to schools as "fire brigades" (*xiaofangdui*) to "establish new revolutionary order." Troublemaking students were ordered to comply with the "three-trust" principle (*san xiangxin*)—that they must trust the school party committees, party work teams, and the provincial party leadership.³¹ Ambiguous messages from above were interpreted differently by different political agents. The restless students interpreted Mao's call to purify the revolutionary ranks as an in-

itation to disregard party discipline, but for many cadres, unauthorized criticism of party branches or officials was tantamount to assault on the party itself.

In the provincial capital, Changsha, university students were the first to defy the local government's attempts to restrain the movement. On August 19, over two hundred students from Hunan University gathered at the municipal party headquarters, shouting slogans condemning the three-trust principle. The protesting students accused the school party branches of implementing the bloodline theory in selecting political targets and of suppressing the revolutionary students. Municipal officials denounced the students' agitation as "the rightist students' attempting to overturn the heaven," claiming that a "Hungarian Incident" was in the making. Workers from nearby factories were called in to surround and rough up the students.³² Although the Beijing leadership swiftly rebuffed the local officials' obstructionist reaction,³³ tensions between the students and party authorities worsened. In September, a party delegation was sent to Beijing to report on the situation in Hunan. Largely because of the breakdown of bureaucratic communication, the delegation returned with the mistaken impression that Beijing was about to launch a counterattack against "rightists' attacks."³⁴ The emboldened provincial leaders took action. In a speech delivered on September 24, Zhang Pinghua, Hunan's party boss, noted that "'demons and monsters attempting to bombard our proletarian headquarters have now exposed themselves.'" In a tone astonishingly similar to that of the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, Zhang proclaimed, "In the previous months we have been successful in tricking the snakes out of their burrows. Now they are all out there, it's time to smash them!" Another provincial official added that unlike 1957, when the number of targets had been limited to 5 percent of the population, the current campaign would have no limit: "However many there may be, we shall get them all."³⁵ As the Sixteen Points explicitly stipulated that student activists should not be politically targeted,³⁶ the campaign mainly attacked workers, lower-level party and government employees, and ordinary citizens who sympathized with the student rebels. Within weeks, tens of thousands of "counterrevolutionaries," "rightists," and "black gang members" were denounced.³⁷ The party-led purges set off a chain of events that was to have a crucial impact on the Cultural Revolution in Hunan, as many victims petitioned for rehabilitation and became the backbone of the surging rebel movement.

In Hunan, the mass movement was plagued with serious divisions from the beginning. The main issues under dispute were the principal targets of the Cultural Revolution and the direction and tactics of the movement.

The political scene of the province was dominated by shifting alliances and conflicts among three major factions, or three large networks of groups with similar political orientations.

Originated in college students' antiwork-team mobilization, the University Headquarters (colloquially known as the Gao Si) was formed in October 1966 as the first major rebel organization in Hunan. This group actively organized opposition to the provincial party authorities and agitated on behalf of those branded counterrevolutionaries and black gang in the earlier months. The Xiang River Storm and Thunder (hereafter the Xiang River Storm or Xiang River) was named after the Yangtze tributary that runs through the province. It was founded in mid-October 1966 in Beijing by Hunanese workers, students, and teachers who traveled to the capital to lodge complaints.³⁸ A loose coalition of several dozen groups, the Xiang River was organized with support from university students, mostly Gao Si members. Expanding with astonishing speed, by early 1967 the Xiang River had become the largest rebel group in Hunan, claiming over 1 million members.

The Xiang River Storm attracted people of diverse social and occupational backgrounds, such as students, teachers, workers, low-level party workers, rusticated youth, and the urban jobless. This coalition of workers with students and teachers was particularly significant. Two decades later, Yang Xiguang wrote about this combination, clearly with the Xiang River in mind: "The nationwide student movement and worker movements formed during the Cultural Revolution were undoubtedly a great disruption of the socialist political system. Before the Cultural Revolution there were only isolated instances of worker and student protest. The forming of worker and student movements which touched everybody's interest occurred for the first time during the Cultural Revolution."³⁹ From its beginning, the mixed membership of the Xiang River posed political difficulties, as the group's less-than-pure composition appeared an obstacle to achieving a full proletarian character. The lack of significant working-class presence in the Xiang River was not unusual at the time, as tight control over state-sector enterprises did not crack until late 1966. In Hunan, early worker rebel groups were based largely in work units, and cross-unit ties did not begin to develop until early 1967. This was partly due to the strength of the Xiang River, which provided an organizational umbrella for groups from diverse social and occupational backgrounds, and many worker groups became affiliated with the Xiang River. The PLA's suppression of the Xiang River in February 1967, as I will discuss shortly, led to the departure of many workers and the formation of separate worker organizations. These groups later coalesced to form the Workers' Alliance

(colloquially known as the Gong Lian) in April 1967, which claimed a membership of over 300,000, mostly from large industrial enterprises.

As in the rest of the country, Hunan's mass movement underwent fragmentation and realignment as the Cultural Revolution proceeded. In early 1967, the local party apparatus disintegrated precipitously as power seizures that started in Shanghai spread to the whole country, marking a triumphant moment for the Hunanese rebels. But new conflicts quickly developed. The January Storm in Hunan did not yield a relatively stable power structure, as it did in Shanghai (see Chapter 4). A crucial factor was the absence of a powerful and well-organized workers' organization, which in Shanghai provided the main force of political reintegration. Another factor was the lack of an alternative local leadership drawn from the pre-Cultural Revolution party establishment that would be able, again as in Shanghai, to receive the backing of Beijing and fill the void of authority. These difficulties were worsened by the policy ambiguities of the central leadership regarding the form that the new power was to assume. During the early months of the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist leadership flirted briefly with the idea that the masses should not only seize power but also radically reorganize society and politics around the egalitarian principles of the Paris Commune: all officials would be chosen by general election, be paid the same salaries as ordinary workers, report regularly to their constituents, and be subject to recall at any time. The state and party bureaucracies were not to be reformed from within or above; rather, they were to be smashed by mass revolutionary action from below.⁴⁰ Such ideas, however, faded away. By February 1967, it had already become the official doctrine that power must be held only by revolutionary committees based on the three-in-one combination of PLA officers, cadres, and mass representatives. In the face of pervasive breakdown, Mao ordered the army to intervene in the name of supporting the leftists. Such policies, however, were inherently vague. Who were the leftists worthy of support? Which cadres should be reinstated? And which mass groups were revolutionary?

In Hunan, the rebels' conflicts with the PLA began in early 1967 when official policy vacillated and took a more moderate turn toward reining in an increasingly divided mass movement and restoring local political order. The crackdown on the Red Flag Army, a group of disgruntled PLA veterans and an active force in the Xiang River coalition, was a pivotal event. In mid-January, Red Flag Army members stormed the local PLA command center and disrupted the military communication system.⁴¹ Beijing issued an order on January 20 forbidding the disruption of military command systems and declared the Hunanese veterans' group reactionary.⁴² The local military immediately banned the Red Flag Army. This sparked strong

reactions from its Xiang River supporters. Numerous leaflets clamoring that “the Red Flag Army is an authentic rebel group” appeared in Changsha, and some even questioned the authenticity of Beijing’s order.

The crackdown on the Xiang River Storm, which actively supported the veterans’ group, took place in early February. The provincial PLA commanders made incendiary reports to Beijing that the Xiang River attracted “‘five black categories’ and ex-convicts” and was preparing for an armed uprising to seize the local PLA headquarters.⁴³ On February 4, the CCRG and the Central Military Committee (CMC) jointly ordered the local PLA in Hunan to “take immediate measures of dictatorship against the reactionary chiefs of the Xiang River Storm and Red Flag Army” and to “divide and break down the hoodwinked masses.”⁴⁴ In Changsha, a state of martial law was proclaimed. The PLA launched a massive manhunt, arresting over 10,000 Xiang River and Red Flag Army activists.⁴⁵ The crackdown on the Xiang River led to the desertion of many of its members, especially workers from large factories. With the Xiang River effectively pushed underground, some of its affiliated workers’ groups formed their own umbrella organization. The Workers’ Alliance, or the Gong Lian, was founded in April 1967 by the merger of several large workers’ groups. The Gong Lian and its 300,000 highly organized industrial workers vigorously protested the PLA’s crackdown on the Xiang River. Conflicts between the rebel alliance and its foes continued throughout the first half of 1967 and reached a climax in major armed battles in the early summer.

The Wuhan Incident and its aftermath led to the temporary retreat of the PLA. In early August, the Beijing leadership castigated the crackdown on the Xiang River in February and conceded that the CCRG’s approval had been “a mistake made in haste.”⁴⁶ The same directive also transferred the authority of the local military to the 47th Army, a field army unit previously stationed in southern Hunan. The rebuke of the local military was followed by the formation of a preparatory revolutionary committee. General Li Yuan, commander of the field army unit, was appointed to head the new power organ. In the brief upsurge of rebel militancy after the Wuhan Incident, the PLA became the target of attack in many parts of China. The national political wind, however, would shift direction very soon, as Mao now decided that the disorder must be brought under control.

The Xiang River reemerged in the summer of 1967, but on a somewhat smaller scale because the Gong Lian had absorbed many of its former members. In August, delegates of Hunanese rebels, cadres, and the local PLA were summoned to Beijing to negotiate the formation of a provincial revolutionary committee as the new local power organ. In this new context, the relationship between the Gong Lian and the Xiang River Storm

quickly deteriorated, and the line of division within Hunan's rebel ranks hardened. Tensions between the two groups had in fact long been in the making. As noted earlier, with the Xiang River banned, the Gong Lian became instrumental in the rebels' battle against the PLA. However, many Xiang River supporters disagreed with the Gong Lian's tactics. For them, the complete exoneration of the Xiang River should be the top priority. To achieve this, they argued, it would be necessary to pursue those responsible and to force the military to openly acknowledge its guilt. The Gong Lian leadership preferred a less provocative approach. Its concern, which was not unreasonable, was that any imprudence might be perceived as a challenge to Beijing. Another source of friction lay in organizational membership and structure. In contrast to the Gong Lian, which drew workers from large state-sector factories, the Xiang River was a miscellany of smaller groups drawing people with heterogeneous social and occupational backgrounds, many with grievances of one kind or another. The Gong Lian leadership showed little enthusiasm for working with these groups of lesser political purity. Hu Yong, an electrician and the Gong Lian's commander, recalled how he felt after attending a joint meeting: "Any time we issued a declaration, there were always seventy or eighty groups. Many had only a dozen or several dozen members, but when it came to a vote we had to count them. We had over 100,000 members, but our group was counted only for one vote. This was not fair. If there were troubles, we wouldn't even know who the troublemakers were. Therefore, we decided that we would be involved in such joint activities as little as possible."⁴⁷ Naturally, this contemptuous attitude of Gong Lian leaders was not favorably received by their Xiang River counterparts.

Both in Beijing and in Changsha, negotiations over the composition of revolutionary committees were protracted as various factions vied to strengthen their positions and undermine their rivals. The Gong Lian insisted that only groups with sizable memberships should be eligible for representation. The Xiang River rejected this proposal, which it saw as an attempt to exclude the motley of small groups that were its main support base. To counter the proposal, groups dissatisfied with the Gong Lian's move proposed an alternative entity named the Provincial-Capital Proletarian Revolutionaries' Great Alliance with the Xiang River Storm as its core, which all rebel organizations in Hunan should join.⁴⁸ To break the deadlock, the CCRG directly appointed members of the new power organ. In addition to cadres and officers, six rebel leaders were appointed to represent Hunan's major mass organizations. Of these spots, the Gong Lian received two and the Xiang River one, and the other three went to groups that had formerly affiliated with the Xiang River but had later declared

neutrality.⁴⁹ This alarmed Xiang River leaders, who feared that it would lead to the dominant position for its rival. Facing the prospect of not being recognized as equal players in the emerging political order, these groups and their leaders refused to go along. By late September, what had been a united rebel coalition effectively broke into two antagonistic factions, led by the Gong Lian and the Xiang River, respectively.

By the fall of 1967, it had become clear that the Cultural Revolution mass movement was winding down, and the issues at stake were who would be able to participate in the new order. Anchored in the constellation of political forces at this critical juncture, the intransigence of segments of Hunanese rebels gradually intensified. As mentioned earlier, various elements in the Xiang River faction were dissatisfied with Hunan's emerging political order. Their recalcitrance reflected, above all, their desire to maintain organizational autonomy. As a former rebel explained: "We were unwilling to dissolve. Our organization was all we had, and it was our only defense. There's strength in numbers [*renduo lilian da*]. As individuals we could achieve nothing. If we dissolved our group and returned to our work units, then those cadres whom we had offended would be able to do anything to us they pleased."⁵⁰ Many also objected to the form of the new power and the principle in accordance with which it was constituted. First, many were alarmed by the dominant position of cadres and military officers. The model of the three-in-one combination brought many bureaucrats back to power, and there was widespread fear among the rank-and-file rebels that reprisals would be forthcoming. Second, many were concerned with the small number of mass representatives allocated. Even when rebel representatives were appointed, they either were not given regular administrative duties or were assigned jobs of lesser importance, while military officers and veteran cadres were put in charge of key economic, political, and security functions. Finally, the most basic complaint was that the revolutionary committees were not created by the masses. The masses had once been promised that they would be able to "take destiny entirely into their own hands," but the new leadership was instead either imposed from above or produced through Byzantine processes of backroom give-and-take. Shortly after Beijing announced the constitution of a "new revolutionary authority" in Hunan, posters appeared in Changsha condemning the decision as a "poisonous weed." Some rebels reportedly characterized the great alliance as "a big hodgepodge" (*dazahui*) and even criticized it as an attempt by the "savior" (*jiushizhu*) to "manipulate the masses."⁵¹ In the Hunanese rebels' opposition to mass demobilization and political recentralization, the desire to maintain factional strength, to preserve organizational identity, and to compete for political power intertwined with the

yearning for autonomy and direct action. Through this process, local disputes over factional rivalry, when intertwined with nationally significant issues, were increasingly denuded of their contextual specificities and given new political meanings.

At a meeting with the national leaders in mid-August 1967, the Hunanese rebel delegates criticized the CCRG for manipulating local political processes. The national leaders were told that wall posters had appeared in Changsha criticizing the official appointees to the revolutionary committee: "The Preparatory Revolutionary Committee should not be imposed from above by higher leaders, who monopolize the work that should be done by the masses themselves [*baoban daiti*]." The delegates also claimed that "60 percent of Changsha's masses do not trust the Preparatory Revolutionary Committee." When one rebel delegate remarked that the new political authorities "should not be bestowed from above [*en ci*]" but should be generated through "democratic elections," Qi Benyu, a member of the CCRG, retorted: "This has been approved by Chairman Mao—how can this be called 'bestowed from above'?" Premier Zhou Enlai followed by saying that "bourgeois democratic formalities" should not be practiced, and Qi invoked Mao as the supreme political authority: "Maybe you would say you don't understand yet. But Chairman Mao's instructions must be obeyed whether you comprehend or not. . . . Whether you understand or not, they must be obeyed. If you don't understand them now, you will understand them in the future."⁵² When Zhou Enlai was asked whether the new leadership should be elected from the bottom up, he replied that this would be impractical. "Anarchism is bound to develop if we immediately implement direct election of the Paris Commune type," Zhou stressed. "The drawback of the Commune was that it failed to centralize power and effectively control the armed forces."⁵³

Throughout the summer and early fall of 1967, tensions among Hunan's rival rebel groups intensified, and minor skirmishes snowballed into major armed battles. In the face of widespread conflicts, Hunan's new governing authority stepped up efforts to tackle worsening public safety and curb the growing factional turmoil. With the aid of the PLA, a drive was initiated to seize weapons from various mass organizations.⁵⁴ The growing violence set off a chain of events that crystallized factional divisions and solidified ties among loosely affiliated Xiang River groups.⁵⁵ In what may be viewed as a precursor to the formation of the Shengwulian, leaders of over twenty Xiang River groups gathered in late August and issued a statement condemning the Gong Lian for "supporting the conservatives" and "repeating the mistakes of the military." The assimilation of petty skirmishes into a familiar narrative highlighting struggles between rebels and

conservatives transformed the meaning of the original conflicts by way of symbolic amplification into part of a great battle over “whether the Cultural Revolution will be carried to the end.”⁵⁶ Through the mediation of preexisting ideological vocabulary and political narrative, minor local discords took on greater political significance, and abstract ideological formulas were given substance in concrete events.

On September 30, delegates of two dozen Xiang River groups gathered to form the Hunan Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance Committee, for which Shengwulian would become the acronym. The resolution passed at the meeting charged the capitalist roaders with “dissolving the revolutionary mass organizations . . . in the name of great alliance” and “treating the masses as if they themselves were the ‘messiah,’ imposing orders from above.” Defying Beijing’s order that great alliances must be unconditional, it insisted that the process “must be premised on the agreement of political ideas.” The Hunanese rebels adamantly refused to dissolve their groups: “The revolutionary mass organizations have not yet completed their historical mission. We must not form a great alliance by dissolving revolutionary mass organizations.”⁵⁷

On October 5 and 6, leaders of over twenty Xiang River groups gathered to finalize the formation of a new alliance. A central committee, the new group’s governing council, was constituted, in which all the groups had a representative. In addition, there was a smaller standing committee of six or seven members. The Shengwulian included, among others, the following member groups:

- The Hunan Red Flag Army, composed of disgruntled army veterans
- The Changsha Youth Guardian Army, composed of young apprentice workers
- The Provincial Teachers’ Alliance, composed of many elementary- and middle-school teachers attacked either for their bad class backgrounds or as rightists
- The Northern District Worker Alliance, joined by workers in small factories
- The Changsha Workers’ United Revolutionary Committee, drawing from workers in light industry and transportation sectors
- The Changsha Peasants’ United Committee, a peasant organization
- The University Storm and Thunder, which included college students and teachers who had been in political trouble during the early months of the Cultural Revolution
- The Hunan Jinggang Mountain, a middle-school student group

- The Middle-School Red Guard Committee, an umbrella group of militant Red Guards from two dozen schools, known for its sophistication in wall-poster battles
- The East Is Red Headquarters, representing workers from collective enterprises
- The Provincial Government Agencies Rebel Liaison Post, composed of low-level party and state workers
- The Red Vocational School Rebels' Association, joined by vocational-school graduates dissatisfied with their job assignments and wage benefits.⁵⁸

Also participating were Communist guerrilla veterans. When PLA units had entered Hunan in the summer of 1949, the local guerrilla forces had been disbanded. Many of their fighters resisted. As a result, in the campaign against “localism” (*difang zhuyi*) in the early 1950s, many former guerrilla fighters were branded alien class elements or even counterrevolutionary bandits.⁵⁹ For years these veterans fought for rehabilitation, and in the Cultural Revolution they seized on the newly proclaimed right to rebel to form their own independent organizations.⁶⁰ Although several major Xiang River groups did not officially participate in the conference, they were nevertheless either controlled by sympathizers or actively involved in the Shengwulian’s cause.

The meeting planned an elaborate celebration on October 11. The agenda included the following: (1) the inaugural speech; (2) the reading of the founding manifesto by members of Red Art Troop, a Red Guard group specializing in agitational performance; (3) a speech by a worker delegate; (4) a speech by a peasant delegate; (5) a speech by a student delegate; (6) a speech by a veteran; (7) a speech by a military academy student; (8) the reading of a celebratory telegram to Mao; (9) the shouting of revolutionary slogans; and (10) a celebratory parade. General Li Yuan, head of the Preparatory Provincial Revolutionary Committee, was also invited, although it was unlikely that he would attend an event sponsored by the archchallenger to the PLA’s authority. It was also planned that the grand celebration would last for four days, with all of Changsha’s movie theaters open to the general public for free, and invitations were also sent to rebel groups in over ten provinces.⁶¹

These grand plans, however, never materialized. On October 9, Zhou Enlai met with Hunanese rebel delegates and warned that “ultraleftist currents targeting the PLA and Chairman Mao” were deeply entrenched in Hunan. He attributed such activities to “KMT [Kuomintang] officers,

landlords, counterrevolutionaries, rich peasants, and bad elements” and urged the Hunanese rebels to overcome factional divisions by purging their ranks. Zhou specifically said that the Hunanese rebels’ plan to form an alternative great alliance “is wrong, it is mistaken, this is ultraleftism,” and he made it abundantly clear that this would go against Mao’s wish to achieve order:

The Chairman has instructed that we should solve the problems of several provinces in June, July, and August. . . . We don’t wish to see reversal or relapse. If you insist on going your own way, there will be relapse. You want to hold a rally on October 11, this is your unilateral position. If you go on like this, you will end up on the opposite side.

When you form a great alliance, you have to consult with the 47th Army [the army unit under General Li Yuan’s command] and the Preparatory Revolutionary Committee, because they are trusted by the Party Center. . . . However large your groups may be—whether in tens of thousands or millions—frankly there is no way you guys can become the leaders in Hunan. Otherwise, what do we do with veteran cadres? You want to get rid of veteran cadres, but how can you do that? How can you be trusted to be given power? . . . You are not ready, you don’t have enough experience. You have yet to learn and to receive more training. I am talking to you because you’re dangerously close to the edge. Let me repeat: the leadership in Hunan can only be the 47th Army. You can only join this process. . . . Let me be very candid with you, you’re already on the edge.⁶²

Zhou’s warning had the intended sobering effect. The celebrations were promptly canceled, and several groups that originally had signed up with the Shengwulian disavowed their involvement. However, the Shengwulian’s name got into the streets in an unexpected way. On October 7, rival groups at the PLA engineering academy in Changsha that supported the Xiang River and the Gong Lian respectively, clashed with each other. The reinforcement Xiang River groups prematurely distributed leaflets in the Shengwulian’s name, perhaps to exaggerate their organizational strength.⁶³ The birth of the Shengwulian was thus impromptu, if not accidental. Calling itself the Hunan Provincial Proletarian Revolutionary Great Alliance, the loose new entity was colloquially known as Sheng-wu-lian, the first characters for “provincial,” “proletariat,” and “alliance.” The birth of the Shengwulian signaled the emergence of new political identities and dynamics that would have a major impact on the Cultural Revolution in Hunan. Although the immediate causes of the split were relatively minor, the differences of tactics and approaches would later become magnified, as both sides needed grander issues on which to stake their claims.

Coalition of the Disaffected?

The Shengwulian had little binding power on those acting in its name. Despite its loose structure and fluid membership, the new entity attracted under its banner many people with grievances of one kind or another, either for having been marginalized in Chinese social life or for having been politically targeted. It was reported that even some former members of the Gao Si, the group that had gone out of favor for its role in the PLA's suppression of Xiang River Storm rebels, joined the Shengwulian to protect themselves.⁶⁴ The Shengwulian reportedly had extensive ties with various economic groups and enjoyed broad support in small-size neighborhood factories or cooperatives (*qujie gongchang*), in which workers' wages, benefits, and social status were generally inferior to those in the state-sector industries.⁶⁵ In Hunan, popular socioeconomic discontents proliferated during the Cultural Revolution, exerting great pressure on the local party apparatus and officials.⁶⁶ Some of these grievances dated from the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the province had suffered serious economic difficulties, food scarcity, and even famine.⁶⁷ The Great Leap catastrophe was followed by a major economic retrenchment. According to the provincial gazetteer, nearly 4,000 enterprises were shut down, and as many as 840,000 workers—nearly 30 percent of the state-sector workforce—lost their jobs. Among these, 735,000 were sent to the countryside.⁶⁸ Overall, Hunan's urban population was reduced by more than one-third, from over 4 million to 2.6 million.⁶⁹ During the Cultural Revolution, many of these workers became mobilized and attacked local officials viewed as responsible for their hardships.⁷⁰

Several groups of people active in the Shengwulian cause are worth discussing.

PLA Veterans

The exoneration of the Red Flag Army, a PLA veterans' group, was one of the most doggedly pursued causes in the Shengwulian's brief history. Veterans played a significant role in the Cultural Revolution's mass politics. In spite of their prestige, veterans' bad fortune was endemic, resulting not only from the neglect of veterans' welfare but also from an inefficient and unaccountable bureaucratic system in which minor grievances would often snowball and become explosive. Many veterans suffered from neglect in the areas of employment and residential rights. During times of economic crisis, local officials often had difficulty finding suitable employment for

veterans. The Cultural Revolution provided disgruntled veterans with the opportunity to express their grievances. Veterans traveled to Beijing, sent petition letters, organized groups, and put up posters.⁷¹ The Beijing leadership repeatedly attempted to disband these veterans' groups as the ex-soldiers' military skills became increasingly threatening.

In Hunan, veterans' mobilization began with the establishment in late 1966 of the Red Flag Army. The group expanded rapidly, growing from one column of 200 members to ninety columns of reportedly 470,000 and becoming one of the largest forces in the Xiang River coalition.⁷² The group was outlawed in early 1967, and its exoneration became the common cause of Xiang River groups and positioned them in opposition to the PLA. The Preparatory Revolutionary Committee refused to rehabilitate the veterans' group. Premier Zhou made a concessionary gesture in August, stating that although the Red Flag Army's headquarters must be disbanded, its grassroots groups could be rehabilitated but must form a part of the great alliance or be amalgamated.⁷³ This solution was unacceptable to the disgruntled veterans and their Xiang River supporters, who proceeded to target those responsible for the suppression of the Red Flag Army, namely, the provincial military commanders and the higher-up officials behind them.

Black Devils

The Shengwulian enjoyed strong support among the victims of various political campaigns, especially among those who had been labeled bourgeois rightists in the late 1950s. I first met a gentleman named Liu in 2006. He had been labeled a rightist in 1957, and his experience during the Cultural Revolution was by no means unique. At our first meeting, Liu was only too eager to retell heartbreaking stories about his suffering. "The rebels were ferocious—they beat me, held my head down, and kicked me. It was so humiliating that I even thought of killing myself."⁷⁴ Liu's stories illustrate how the dominant discourse of the Cultural Revolution, with its exclusive focus on violence and suffering, powerfully shaped historical memory. As we became more familiar with each other, however, the focus of our conversation shifted, and his stories began to disclose greater complexities. Liu revealed that in fact he had been active in a group that called itself the Black Devils' Battle Regiment, which drew mostly from former rightists. Encouraged by rebel attacks on the power holders, these "black devils" (*hei gui*) demanded the reversal of their verdict. "We organized our own group. We confronted the cadres who wronged us, and we struggled against them!" Liu's face glowed when he told the story of how his pariah comrades became politically active. During one of our meetings, he even

“discovered” a whole suitcase of dusty documents stored under his bed, which included pamphlets, handbills, petition letters, a membership roster, and even an account book with a meticulous record of income and expenses. Liu apparently was the group’s treasurer.

Liu joined the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) underground cell in Changsha in the late 1940s and actively participated in anti-KMT student activities. Having received journalism training in the early 1950s, he worked as a reporter for the *New Hunan Daily*, the province’s largest newspaper. During the relatively relaxed political atmosphere of the Hundred Flowers movement, the newspaper’s staff was embroiled in a heated debate over the orientation of the paper: whether it should be operated as the obedient mouthpiece of the party or should take on a more independent, public role by expressing the people’s views, wishes, and grievances. The party establishment favored a more restricted role. The provincial propaganda chief was quoted as once saying bluntly: “I run the newspapers. If they don’t act in accordance with my wishes, then what do I even need of them?”⁷⁵ Many reporters and editors disagreed for both professional and political reasons. As a result, 74 among 143 of the newspaper’s staff, including Liu, were branded rightists.⁷⁶

At twenty-six, Liu’s rising journalistic career ended abruptly. He was expelled from the party and sent to the countryside for punitive labor. His misfortune was not unique. According to the official history, over 31,000 were labeled rightists in Hunan, including 14 percent of all primary- and middle-school teachers in the province. The subsequent campaign against right-wing opportunism targeted those who supposedly disagreed with Mao’s Great Leap policies, and over 100,000 people were attacked.⁷⁷ Although Liu’s rightist status was officially removed in 1961, the stigma remained, and the paper refused to rehire an ex-rightist. Making a living as a rural teacher, Liu lived and worked cautiously until the Cultural Revolution broke out. With Mao’s call for rebellion, many of those who had suffered from attacks participated in the movement. The Cultural Revolution’s mass politics—the direct integration of the highest political authority and the mass movement—not only undercut bureaucratic authorities but also broke normal social boundaries by empowering the marginalized or powerless. As Liu said of his experience: “We were persecuted by the power holders. We were pariahs, and nobody even wanted to talk to us. Now Chairman Mao called on the people to rebel against the power holders who bullied the people. The black devils finally became humans. We had Chairman Mao behind us, and we no longer feared.”⁷⁸ In Hunan, many victims of previous political campaigns battled to win reversal of cases in spite of Beijing’s repeated injunctions. Former rightists organized

investigation groups, published newspapers and pamphlets to publicize their stories, and sent delegates to Changsha and Beijing to lodge complaints.⁷⁹ The political victims' groups supported the Shengwulian's attempt to continue political agitation, and their cause also enjoyed significant sympathy among rank-and-file Shengwulian members. The response from the Shengwulian leadership, however, was considerably more cautious. One of the rightists' groups attempted to join the Shengwulian, but its request was ignored. The concern was that accepting the group could make the Shengwulian organization politically vulnerable because former rightists often became convenient targets of attack.⁸⁰

Rusticated Urban Youth

The Hunanese rusticates were some of the staunchest supporters of the Shengwulian's cause. Beginning in the late 1950s, school graduates were often transferred to the countryside to lessen the state's economic burden.⁸¹ Their destinations were either the poverty-stricken mountainous areas in the province's southern and western periphery or parasite-infested wetlands in the northeast. Many rusticates were very young, only fifteen or sixteen years old and recent graduates from junior high school. Although many were motivated ideologically, others responded to a variety of pressures. When persuasion failed to work, pressure would intensify. Many were from nonred family backgrounds, which prevented them from being admitted to colleges or even senior high schools.⁸²

Municipal and neighborhood cadres often exaggerated the attractions of rural life, and the provincial press painted a rosy picture of rusticated youth overcoming hardships and proving themselves as worthy revolutionary successors. The actual picture, however, was far less sanguine. Peasants often saw the newcomers as burdens that might reduce their level of income.⁸³ Rusticates were often assigned less remunerative work, and many suffered from economic impoverishment. A breakdown of incomes earned by members of a youth farm in Jiangyong revealed that most were unable even to pay their way. In December 1966, members were each charged a total of 7 yuan for food, but none of them earned more than 2.51 yuan. As a result, many were forced to borrow from their parents or from the farm, and many ended up owing more than they had earned. A youth who raised the matter of debt was told bluntly by a cadre, "It doesn't matter at all. If you can't pay the money, your son will; if your son can't, your grandson will." To break out of debt, some undertook sideline work, such as fishing or working on private plots, which were frowned on as selfish pursuits. And girls as

young as sixteen or seventeen often had to marry local villagers because they were unable to make a living income to feed themselves.⁸⁴

In addition to everyday hardship, abuses and discrimination by local cadres were especially damaging to the rusticates' morale. Cases of rural cadres sexually molesting young females were often reported.⁸⁵ The peasants' perception of the newcomers' alienness was exaggerated by the widespread view that the rusticates were mostly the social dregs unwanted in cities—the physically weak, the unemployed, and those with bad class origins. An example of how local cadres regarded the rusticates as dregs dumped in the countryside for punishment was reported from Lingling County in southwest Hunan. There, when a cadre was asked to what class category the rusticates belonged, he replied, “The majority of educated youth are landlords' puppies. Your sons will also be landlords; your grandsons will still be landlords.” In another case, the rusticates, delighted to learn that their commune was to buy a pump, felt that their knowledge would be useful. The cadre, however, warned the peasants, “The majority of educated youth are children of landlords and capitalists. We would not feel safe if they were to control the pump.” As a result, the rusticates later complained, “We educated youth had no right to have anything to do with the pump. Sometimes when we stood closer to look at it or touch it, commune members watched us with their vigilant and antagonistic look.”⁸⁶

The Cultural Revolution made available unparalleled opportunities for the rusticates to voice their grievances. Local cadres resented the troublemakers. In one case, when the rusticates attempted to travel to the county seat to lodge complaints, the commune's cadres mobilized the local militia. “The capitalist power holders intensively hated and feared our revolutionary action and put up obstacles of every description. They deployed armed militiamen to surround us in the late of night, as if they were confronting some formidable enemy. They even threatened us: ‘Anyone who dares to escape will be shot like a wild animal!’ . . . At last, we risked our lives and were able to break out of their blockade.”⁸⁷ With the paralysis of local party authorities, the majority of Hunan's 78,000 rusticated youth returned to the cities to make rebellions.⁸⁸

Although many exploited the temporary political breakdown to return home, others fled under extreme circumstances. During the late summer and early fall of 1967, for instance, over 6,000 rusticates in southern Hunan fled back to their home cities during the Dao County massacre, arguably one of the bloodiest episodes in the Cultural Revolution, when village cadres, party activists, and militiamen slaughtered in cold blood thousands of individuals belonging to the black categories and their family members.⁸⁹

The violence in Hunan's southernmost rural areas was a result of the explosive mix of factional antagonisms, local and regional differences, and deeply entrenched biases associated with state-imposed social categories.⁹⁰ Briefly, when the Xiang River Storm was rehabilitated in the summer of 1967, its rivals were thrown on the defensive. The mass movement in the area was divided into two bitterly battling factions, the Red Alliance and the Revolutionary Alliance. The former drew mainly from local peasants, led by party officials and paramilitary personnel. The latter, made up of local students, rusticated youth, artisans, and schoolteachers, was part of a provincewide coalition in which the Xiang River was the leading player. After the triumphant comeback of the Xiang River, battles between local factions intensified as the Xiang River's rivals spread the word that "the Party Center has recognized the Xiang River groups only in Changsha, but not in the counties." It was also alleged that the rusticated youth joined the Xiang River to "rebel against the poor and lower-middle peasants and to turn over the sky [*biantian*]." ⁹¹ In early August, emboldened by the comeback of the Xiang River in Changsha, the Revolutionary Alliance attacked its rival. The Red Alliance was forced to retreat to the rural areas, where its sympathizers controlled the party and paramilitary organizations.

In mid-August, rumors spread in the villages that Chiang Kai-shek was going to attack the mainland, and that the Xiang River—often under suspicion for its impure social composition—was going to lead a counterrevolutionary revolt joined by the black categories. It was also reported that a number of counterrevolutionary networks were secretly operating in the region, drawing thousands of members. It was rumored that many family members of landlords and counterrevolutionaries had joined the Xiang River and had received salaries and guns, as well as directives to "make trouble for the poor peasants." It was also alleged that the black categories had plotted to kill "all the party members, political activists, and poor peasants, and half of the middle peasants."⁹² The stories spread in the local communities and led to outbreaks of fear. Officials who occupied important positions in the Red Alliance ordered the village militia to launch preemptive attacks, making such incendiary statements as "The class enemies are sharpening their knives, we must sharpen our knives, too. Those who strike first will gain advantage, those who act later will suffer." Killings began on August 17 and spread to the entire region within days. Slogans circulated proclaiming "Kill all Xiang River mad dogs" and "The most reliable and thorough method to eradicate class antagonisms is to exterminate all landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and bad elements." Led by local cadres and militia leaders, peasant courts were set up to sentence anyone deemed a class enemy to death. Many victims were

killed at frenzied mass meetings, shot with hunting rifles, decapitated or hacked, clubbed, stoned, or burned to death, blown up by homemade bombs, or simply buried alive. The scope of targets quickly expanded from “four black categories” to “seven categories” and eventually to “twenty-two categories,” including some disliked by local cadres or fellow villagers.⁹³

The rampant violence that erupted in southern Hunan had a chilling effect on the rusticates in the region, as many from stigmatized class origins feared that they might suffer the same fate. At a nearby farm, in one instance, local militiamen summarily shot two landlords and their sons during a mass rally and hanged a young woman married to one of the so-called bastards. Several hundred rusticates were forced to witness the execution, which was intended as a warning.⁹⁴ Although there was no large-scale violence against the rusticates, isolated attacks frequently erupted. Such incidents set off panic among the rusticates. Over 6,000 undertook an arduous march to flee back to Changsha, traveling through the treacherous mountain paths in Guangxi to avoid the northbound route passing through the epicenter of violence, as rumors spread that roads were guarded by militiamen waiting to catch “fish that had escaped the net” (*louwang zhiyu*).

Having freshly escaped the vortex of violence, many rusticates dropped out of politics and became nonparticipating “wanderers” (*xiaoyao pai*), taking up odd jobs or simply staying home, while others joined existing Red Guard groups or formed new ones. In late 1967, there were a dozen rusticates’ groups in Changsha, with membership ranging from a few hundred to several thousand.⁹⁵ They produced their own papers, in which they published articles exposing the abuses associated with the rustication program. They also organized mass rallies, put up posters, and staged art performances. During several of the events organized by the returnees, hundreds of traditional Chinese couplets were put up in the downtown streets, together with calligraphy scrolls, cartoons, and posters, attracting tens of thousands of people. One rusticate later recalled the festival scene:

Our organizations had a large assembly of talented men and women, including those good at calligraphy, cartoons, and engraved prints, among other things. It was just spectacular. At the time over 15,000 youth from Changsha were rusticated, so the issue we raised affected thousands of families. We stood by and watched how people reacted. Many reading the couplets were moved to tears, and some became angry. Some nodded their heads back and forth, apparently enjoying the calligraphy and literary quality of the couplets. Others were skeptical, asking, “How is it possible that youngsters in their teens and twenties are able to produce couplets so well grounded in classical

and literary Chinese, and with such calligraphic beauty?" So some of our students put out a table, picked up brush pens, and wrote couplets impromptu. The audience, marveling at the performance, applauded in enthusiasm.⁹⁶

Using the victims' bloodstained shirts as stage props, artistically talented young men and women also performed street-corner skits dramatizing the abuses suffered by the rusticated youth, winning tears and cheers from the audience. The rusticates performed the musical and dance skit "Asian, African, and Latin-American Peoples Desire to Be Emancipated" ("Ya fei la renmin yao jiefang") at the Hunan Opera House in front of several thousand people. The lyric of the song that accompanied the skit goes as follows:

We the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America desire liberation,
 The angry anti-American flame flies as high as the mountain,
 We can no longer tolerate slavery and oppression,
 We vow to bury all old and new colonialisms.
 We smash the shackles with our iron fists,
 We meet liberation with happiness and joy,
 Listen, we beat the anti-American battle drum louder and louder,
 We are united as one, dash forward toward victory.

The dancers wore colorful costumes and painted their faces black or white. The rusticates symbolically projected their own plight onto the suffering and struggle of the colored peoples of the Third World oppressed by imperialists and capitalists, and the emotionally powerful performance generated widespread support for their cause.

The rusticates called for an end to abuses in the rustication program. Some demanded the program's complete abolition, while others called for human rights, which referred to the right to refuse involuntary resettlement. A provocative demand made by the rusticated youth was to regain their urban *hukou* status. The rusticates put forth such slogans as "Oppose persecution," "Oppose discrimination," "We want *hukou*," and even "It's right to rebel for *hukou*" (*zao hukou fan youli*)—clearly echoing Mao's call "It's right to rebel."⁹⁷ An essay published in the *Mountain Eagle*, a rusticates' paper, claimed that freedom of residence was a basic right granted in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. The agitation of the rusticates, in particular the often violent rebellion to regain *hukou*, was compared to the Luddites' acts of machine breaking among English workers in the early nineteenth century. Arguing that *hukou* was the instrument through which the educated youth were relegated to the bottom of society, the article responded to criticisms that rusticates' rebel-

lion was a selfish, economistic act, countering that it was quintessentially a political matter:

The “educated youth” [*zhiqing*] constitute a special social category, radically different from that of cadres, students, workers, and peasants. It is the lowest social stratum singularly created by the rustication policy of Liu Shaoqi. Cadres are persecuted, not because they are cadres but because they have rebelled. Workers are persecuted not because they belong to the category of workers, but because they have become rebels. The same applies to students and peasants. But for the educated youth, they are persecuted or even get killed only because they are *zhiqing*. In the Liuyang region, if someone is recognized as *zhiqing*, he would get into big trouble. In Jiangyong, the power holders and conservatives established “peasants’ supreme courts” and shouted slogans such as “Killing all those bastards from Changsha.” The so-called bastards from Changsha [*Changsha lao*] refer to the educated youth—it is the synonym for people that would have to be “thoroughly exterminated” [*sha jue*].⁹⁸

The national leadership, however, rebuffed the rusticates’ demands. The decisive blow came in October when Beijing declared that the rustication policy derived from the “great instructions of Chairman Mao” and issued the following injunctions:

- Rusticates must immediately return to their rural posts, and their organizations must be disbanded. Urban mass groups must not enroll rusticates as members.
- Those who fail to go back to the countryside will not be issued urban *hukou*. Of those who have obtained urban *hukou*, theirs would be revoked. The “bad chiefs” (*huai toutou*) and class enemies who instigated these activities must be punished.
- All rusticates must approach the hardships they encounter “in the proper way” (*zhengque duidai*). They must labor hard and overcome their difficulties. They must not leave their production posts to conduct “revolutionary travel” or lodge complaints with higher authorities. If they have any grievances, they may send petitions to the relevant authorities via postal mail.⁹⁹

Despite mounting pressure, many rusticates continued to agitate. In one case, it was reported that some youth “instigated by the Shengwulian elements” denounced Beijing’s decree as “a poisonous weed.”¹⁰⁰ In another case, the rusticates submitted their own proposal on how to reform the rustication program:

1. Placement offices at various levels—provincial, municipal, and county—should include representatives of the rusticated youth.

2. Instead of being integrated among villagers, which would make them vulnerable to discrimination and abuses, rusticated youth should be settled in youth farms, and they should be allowed to choose their destinations.
3. Rusticated youth should receive priority in the recruitment of factory workers.
4. The physically weak or sick, or those who have family-related hardships, should be allowed to return to the cities and regain their urban *hukou*.¹⁰¹

Defying Beijing's injunction that mass mobilization must be limited locally, Changsha's rusticates expanded their ties to other provincial cities. Cross-provincial ties were also formed. In late 1967, some rusticates traveled from Guangzhou to Changsha, considered by many as the center of the rusticated youth movement in the central-south region. The Guangzhou visitors not only joined forces with their Changsha comrades but reportedly also participated in activities organized by the Shengwulian, one of the rusticates' staunch supporters. Invited by their Cantonese comrades, some Changsha rusticates traveled south to pass on their experience in organizing protests.¹⁰² In another case, a group of Changsha rusticates traveled to Wuhan, participated in local protests, and even sold 3,000 copies of their paper, raising a substantial amount of money.¹⁰³ The communication and cooperation among rusticates from different regions reached a peak in late 1967 when delegates from a dozen provinces gathered in Changsha to discuss matters of pressing concern.

Although many rusticates engaged in peaceful discussions among themselves and in consultation with government officials, some were less patient. On November 8, for example, over 80 young men from a state farm near Changsha stormed a government building, "illegally detained cadres, beat up rebel leaders, and stole a huge sum of money of over 8,000 yuan." On November 11, over 160 rusticates from four state farms occupied the same premises. "They posted guards everywhere, detained anyone in sight, beat up anyone who came into their way, and seized any property they could lay their hands on, thereby creating a prevailing atmosphere of fear and terror." A few days later, the crowd, which expanded to several hundred, returned and attacked the same facility, now guarded by PLA soldiers, with knives, iron rods, and shovels. It was alleged that the attackers loudly chanted slogans such as "Act up, start struggle, charge ahead, we want to accomplish our new course through struggle" and "Pay back four years of our life, pay back our youth, pay back our political status, pay back our

four great freedoms, pay back our future, and pay back our human rights.” They also put up posters stating “We want to live in houses, we want to wear clothes,” “If there’s money, let’s divide it up,” “If there’s food, let’s share it,” “Protest persecution and discrimination,” “Down with the small clique of PLA men,” “Down with the scum of PLA,” “The PLA must stand aside,” and “Whoever does not respond to our demands must be toppled, whether you’re from the 47th or 48th Army.” These rusticates, according to a later report, “openly defied Chairman Mao’s instructions. Disguised as ‘rebels,’ they were in fact the ‘ultraleft.’”¹⁰⁴

THE ATTEMPTS by the Shengwulian coalition to challenge the local center of power and resist the national trend toward demobilization provided the opportunity for various forces to realign and regroup. The factionalizing processes that led to the increasing antagonisms between the Workers’ Alliance and the Xiang River—and eventually to the rise of the Shengwulian—were in large part driven by competition for power, personal ambitions and conflicts, entrenched organizational identities, and other discords that were not necessarily rooted in the social composition of the contending parties and their original grievances, as scholars have often assumed. However, as factional divides widened and political tactics and orientations increasingly diverged, the new political identities that surfaced then became the rallying point around which different social groups and interests coalesced. That is, the factionalization of mass politics and the development and mobilization of social interests had different dynamics and origins, and only under specific conditions did they become conjoined with one another.

With their grievances unresolved, the disgruntled elements attempted to carry on their rebellions in an environment no longer hospitable to the uninhibited mass politics characteristic of the earlier phase of the Cultural Revolution. For instance, the agitation of the rusticated youth pitted them against the province’s new masters, whose mandate was to end factional strife and restore political and economic order. In voicing their grievances, the rusticates’ conflicts with the new center of power positioned them to join forces with those who shared their desire for continuous revolution. In the meantime, their continued rebellion also made them an attractive target for recruitment by the so-called ultraleftists who were dissatisfied for their own reasons with the Cultural Revolution’s shift of direction. Indeed, although the Shengwulian’s cause attracted many who were marginalized or underprivileged in Chinese society, the divergence in Hunan’s mass movement may not be fully explained by the differences in the

social composition and class affiliations of those involved. Rather, the divergent courses of political mobilization may be better understood as the contingent consequence of unfolding interactions of conjunctural but separately conditioned events and processes.

“The People’s Commune of China”

Although the Cultural Revolution brought China’s discontented citizens unparalleled opportunities to voice their grievances, most such outbursts tended to focus on their local circumstances, and rarely were they connected, either discursively or organizationally, with nationally significant struggles. However, as demands snowballed, new chains of symbolic equivalence began to develop among diverse struggles. Through the reciprocal movement among individual conflicts, particular demands lost their contextually specific identities and became aggregatively reconstituted, and the political space became discursively dichotomized into a collective popular political subject in opposition to an oppressive system and its agents.

The rise of an antibureaucratic critique in Hunan illustrates such processes of ideological transformation. Despite the group’s brief life span, some young members of the Shengwulian demanded an alternative analysis of Chinese socialism and contributed crucially to the formulation of a novel perspective from which the Cultural Revolution movement could be understood. The questions that concerned them were both theoretical and strategic: What were the Cultural Revolution’s root causes? Who should be its target? What would be the means to realize its goals? And what forms of political analysis would be adequate to guide the movement? Scrutinizing the Cultural Revolution’s inherent limitations, they questioned the discrepancy between the movement’s proclivity for attacking individual officials and its radical revolutionary rhetoric, arguing that the major conflict in China was not between Mao’s supporters and the revisionists, nor between the proletariat and the remnant of the propertied classes, but between a collective red capitalist class and the people as a whole. As “Whither China?”—the text for which the Shengwulian became well known—declared: “The relations between them [the red capitalist class] and the people have changed . . . to those between rulers and the ruled and between exploiters and the exploited. From the relations of revolutionaries of equal standing, they have become the relations between oppressors and the oppressed. The class interests, special prerogatives, and high salaries of the class of red capitalists are built on the foundation of

oppression and exploitation of the broad masses.”¹⁰⁵ In identifying China’s “red capitalist class” as the main target, these critics attempted to forge a new common language that could communicatively extend particular struggles to different contexts through translating the singular circumstances of specific grievances into a more general political critique.

Arguably the most important ultraleft text produced during the Cultural Revolution, “Whither China?” was penned in December 1967 by Yang Xiguang (also known as Yang Xiaokai), a nineteen-year-old high-school senior.¹⁰⁶ The essay appeared under the modest pseudonym “A Soldier” (*yi bing*). According to one of Yang’s classmates, when asked why he did not use his real name, Yang replied that it was mostly “a gesture of contempt”—that only “one soldier” could fight and defeat all the mighty adversaries.¹⁰⁷ As a draft manifesto of the self-styled Ultraleft Commune, the essay originated in discussions among some rank-and-file Red Guards frustrated with the movement’s apparent impasse. Only eighty copies were mimeographed, and fewer than twenty were actually distributed.¹⁰⁸ Yang and his peers’ adoption of the “ultraleft” (*jizuo*) as their political identity is intriguing. Although “Left” and “Right” were notoriously vague terms in Chinese political discourse, the “ultraleft” was typically associated with extremism and dogmatism. Many involved with the Shengwulian rejected the ultraleft association, but some consciously took on the provocative term to signify their aspirations, reportedly even calling for “the ultraleftists all over China” to unite.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to his younger sister, Yang claimed that the ultraleftist rebels were the most revolutionary and even speculated that Mao might also be an “ultraleftist,”¹¹⁰ thereby claiming legitimacy for an otherwise scandalous term and transforming it into a sign of political defiance.

Yang’s ideas resulted from his experience in the Cultural Revolution. He was the child of senior provincial officials, and his status fell abruptly during the early months of the movement when his parents became politically disgraced, denounced for their criticism of the Great Leap policy in the late 1950s. As a so-called bastard, their teenage son was rejected by his fellow students from cadre families. He later recalled going to Red Guard meetings: “I felt it was just like Hitler’s Party—they pushed a very strong class line. They promoted the bloodline couplet: ‘If your father’s a hero, you’re a good fellow; if your father’s a counterrevolutionary, you’re a bastard.’ I felt very disturbed by this couplet.”¹¹¹ Yang founded a small student group in January 1967 to support the Xiang River Storm, although his parents tried hard to keep him out of politics for fear of being implicated as the instigators behind their son’s activities. Later, Yang tried to persuade his parents to support the rebels by putting up wall posters to

protest being “persecuted by the capitalist power holders.” Subsequently, his father was able to stay at the headquarters of one of the rebel groups, which offered him protection. “I felt that if I could get my parents to support the Rebels,” Yang reasoned, “that would justify my family background, too.”¹¹²

One of the most formative experiences for Yang was a conversation with the family’s longtime housekeeper. For many years the old lady had behaved submissively toward everyone in the family. During the early months of the Cultural Revolution, Yang went to her for sympathy after having read posters denouncing his parents. To his great shock, she declared that she completely approved of their downfall and confessed that her submission had been largely feigned. Charging that Yang’s cadre parents had exploited her all along, she claimed that the housekeepers were now organizing their own rebel group. This left a profound impact on Yang, as he told the story later: “I felt as if the whole world had turned over. Lots of common people had smiled at me before the Cultural Revolution for being the son of a big shot, but I now felt it had only been pretense. . . . I suddenly recognized the keenness of the conflict, that those at the bottom actually hated those at the top, much as in Marx’s writings on the conflict between classes.”¹¹³ “I realized that social contradictions and conflicts like these could be explained neither in terms of Mao’s theory of the ‘continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat’ nor that of the ‘two-line struggle,’” Yang recollected. “I was therefore determined to seek answers from the works of Marxism, and to understand the real conditions of Chinese society through systematic social investigations.”¹¹⁴

Yang Xiguang was actively involved in Xiang River activities. During the military crackdown in early 1967, he spent six weeks in an overcrowded detention center. “In prison I saw a newspaper,” he later recalled. “I saw that the tone of the editorials had changed to a position in favor of the conservatives, that the Cultural Revolution was to end soon. So I felt disillusioned [*huan mie*].”¹¹⁵ After his release from prison, Yang traveled to several northern Chinese cities to participate in the “revolutionary link-up” (see Figure 5). In Beijing, Yang read various Red Guard materials that contained notions about “a new privileged class of officials.” He also discovered a Red Guard paper published by rebels at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that condemned privileges among top officials and talked about the Foreign Ministry containing “a high-salaried stratum” or “new privileged class.”¹¹⁶ In Beijing, Yang was also exposed to ideas produced by the April 3 Faction (see Chapter 3).¹¹⁷ Its proclamation “On New Trends of Thought” argued that although China’s socialist revolution had abolished



Figure 5. Yang Xiguang (right) with younger sisters Yang Hui (left) and Yang Xiaocheng (center) in Wuhan, participating in the “revolutionary link-up,” 1967. Courtesy of Yang Hui.

private property, political power and economic property were concentrated in the hands of a small minority—the party and state bureaucrats. In theory, these should be the trustees rather than the owners of the social property they controlled, but in practice they had become the *de facto* owners. The party power holders, therefore, constituted a privileged class, and the goal of the Cultural Revolution was then understood as the redistribution of property and power and the overthrow of this privileged class.¹¹⁸ These ideas had a critical impact on Yang. In a letter sent from Beijing to his younger sister Yang Hui, dated July 4, Yang wrote that “I believe that a high-salaried stratum has already been formed in China.

Chairman Mao has said [the Cultural Revolution] is a revolution of one class overthrowing another. Today we must overthrow the high-salaried stratum.”¹¹⁹ “From then on,” he later recalled, “I started to associate these ideas with the widespread discontent expressed by the urban masses, and I began to reflect on broader issues regarding the causes and origins of the Cultural Revolution.”¹²⁰

Yang’s reflection on the Cultural Revolution culminated in several essays in which he attempted to develop analyses in ways markedly different from the official doctrine. In an essay penned in October, titled “Ideas about the Formation of Maoist Groups,” he expressed doubts—shared by a growing number of young people—about the ongoing Cultural Revolution. “We today are participating in the unparalleled Cultural Revolution,” wrote Yang. “We talk about rebellion every day, and about carrying on the revolution to the end. But these are really vague and empty notions. Questions such as a systematic class analysis of Chinese society, of the origins, nature, and goals of this great proletarian political revolution (this revolution definitely cannot be called a ‘cultural revolution,’ but for the present time we have no other term but to refer to it as such)—all these questions have remained unexplored.”¹²¹ Yang pushed his nagging doubts further:

How do we assess and understand the situation of class struggle in China during the past decade or so?

Why were various party committees and authorities overthrown? How is it that so many capitalist power holders were identified and dragged out?

Why was the January Power Seizure necessary? Why is it that so many party and league members were inclined to become conservative? Why are those who dare to think and dare to rebel usually viewed as troublemakers? . . . Why do most of the Cultural Revolution rebels feel they have just woken up from a long dream [*dameng chuxing*]? Why? Why?¹²²

In a letter to Qiu Liming, a student in Shandong, Yang wrote that “old party committees remain mostly intact, and Hunan is still ruled by the same bureaucrats, who oppress the people.” “Thus we must choose between either waiting for defeat or rising up to resist,” he stressed. “We must not let them consolidate their power. . . . I really doubt whether the Cultural Revolution can continue in the same way it is.”¹²³

Yang Xiguang proposed a loose network of “small groups of Mao Zedong–ism” to provide the grassroots infrastructure for reorienting the Cultural Revolution through conjoining political activism and critical intellectual inquiry. “The radical rebels [*jijin de zaofanpai*],” he claimed, “have so many puzzles that they can’t find answers. . . . An urgent need for

critical theoretical inquiry is undoubtedly emerging on the horizon.”¹²⁴ Clearly, the idea was developed from concerns that Yang and his peers had about the turn of the Cultural Revolution. Yang expressed skepticism about the idea, which Mao was toying with at the time, of rebuilding the party in preparation for a national congress of the CCP, which would be convened in 1969. Believing that the existing CCP must undergo revolutionary changes, Yang wrote that the party congress “should not be expected to settle completely the question of where the party is going. The party that may emerge . . . will inevitably be a party of bourgeois reformism that serves the bourgeois usurpers holed up in the revolutionary committees. . . . This determines that it would not be possible that the congress can settle the question of whither China is going, the core of which remains whither the Communist Party and whither the PLA.”¹²⁵ For Yang, instead of restoring the party as a centralized body, a network of study societies would constitute the organizational form of grassroots social and political rebuilding. One of the main tasks of the Cultural Revolution was, above all, the self-education of the youth, who had to discover the rational basis for their hitherto largely instinctive revolt. Accordingly, their organizations had to become the center of systematic investigation and study. In combining theoretical study, social research, and political activism, such groups would become the basis for establishing a new political entity, or what Yang called “the party of Mao Zedong–ism,” as an alternative to the bureaucratically entrenched CCP.

Yang defined “Mao Zedong–ism” (*Mao Zedong zhuyi*) as the endeavor to reflect critically on the conditions of Chinese socialism. “After the seizure of state power, many socialist states have stagnated or even degenerated,” Yang wrote. “Political and intellectual discussions in these countries have essentially become dead. . . . Few people engage in serious and lively discussions about matters regarding how to transform our political system; few people bother to raise new and interesting ideas about how to reform our society.”¹²⁶ Arguing that “Mao Zedong–ism” could subvert the party’s authoritarian political culture, he believed that Mao was “the first to break this deadening atmosphere” and to expose “the contradictions between cadres and the masses.”¹²⁷ For Yang, these ideas about the emergence of privileged strata and the necessity of a continuous revolution were the hallmark of Maoism as a form of critical political intervention. To the extent that such ideas posed a threat to the vested interest groups, they faced hostile reactions from the established power. Yang argued that China’s bureaucratic establishment attempted to blunt the radical potential of Maoism by deification and mystification: “The capitalist roaders

abused their power to suppress the most creative, revolutionary, dynamic, and vital aspects of Chairman Mao's ideas. Only the vaguest, most generic was allowed to be publicized and disseminated. . . . They have managed to deify Mao's brilliant ideas into some ritualistic entities. In doing so, they have also distorted and rendered impotent the revolutionary soul of Mao Zedong-ism."¹²⁸ Ironically, Yang's attempt to separate Mao Zedong-ism from the party occurred precisely when Mao was about to reimpose ideological centralization, and his views would soon be denounced by none other than Maoist leaders themselves.

Yang believed that in order to comprehend the conflicts in the Cultural Revolution, systematic social investigations were urgently needed. In late 1967, Yang and some fellow students traveled to different parts of the province, meeting people from all walks of society. What they found was a plethora of grievances. Many peasants loathed the state's monopoly on the sale of grain and complained that state-set prices were unfairly low. The radical collectivization of the Great Leap Forward years had devastated the rural economy, and local officials engaged in all sorts of abuses and forms of petty corruption. During the late 1950s, many private houses were either demolished or illegally occupied to make way for the collectives' projects, and often even cooking utensils, clothes, and furniture were collectivized. Ancestral graves were dug up, local temples and shrines were destroyed, and headstones and bricks were used for irrigation projects. Local cadres frequently resorted to physical violence to coerce demoralized and recalcitrant peasants to work harder. The peasants also complained that too much of the fruit of their labor was channeled into collective reinvestment, and some even claimed that the taxes during the KMT era had been lower.¹²⁹ According to Yang, the Socialist Education Campaign, the precursor of the Cultural Revolution, provided an outlet for the peasants' resentments by mobilizing them to criticize local cadres. "The peasants had liked the Four Cleanups; they had felt that justice had finally come. But the rural cadres had hated that campaign; some had even committed suicide."¹³⁰ Apparently, peasant grievances were pervasive in the province. We may have a glimpse from a document titled "A Program of Revolutionary Rebellion," issued in September 1967 by a peasant organization called Mao Zedong Thought Association of Hundreds of Millions of Peasants in Dong'an, a rural county in southwestern Hunan. In addition to complaining about heavy tax burdens and excessive labor levies, the peasant protesters also raised the following demands, among others:

- Peasants must enjoy genuine political and economic freedom. Their rights should not be violated, and illegal and abusive practices, such

as tying up, beating, denunciation, and deception, must be abolished. Peasants should receive the same political treatment as workers, cadres, and technical professionals.

- As long as peasants have done a good job in collective production, their income derived from sideline production (such as cultivating private plots, raising pigs, chickens, and ducks, and embroidery) should not be vilified as capitalist.
- Insofar as provision of goods is concerned, peasants should be treated in the same way as people from other occupations and should not be treated unequally. For example, the system of providing beans and tofu based on ration coupons must be abolished; and cloth coupons should be distributed equally among workers, cadres, city residents, and the rural population, regardless of status distinctions.
- Peasants who become ill must be covered by the public health-care system in the same way in which cadres and state workers are. No matter how seriously ill a state worker becomes, all possible means will be tried to bring him back, and all expenses will be covered by the government. When a peasant gets seriously ill, however, it would be a huge deal if he could receive treatment worth a dozen or even a few yuan. And if the treatment would cost several hundred yuan, then the patient's fate would be to wait for death. The peasants' well-being enjoys no guarantee. Such a system is patently unjust.

Demanding that the “blood debt [*xuezhai*] of peasant deaths between 1960 and 1966” be repaid, the peasant protesters called for a nationwide movement that would “lessen burdens of the peasants, enhance their economic and political status, thoroughly lift them out of poverty, . . . overthrow the unjust social system, turn an inverted history on its own head, and struggle for the complete victory of hundreds of millions of peasants.”¹³¹

Penned in late 1967, Yang's famous essay “Whither China?” took its title from Mao's essay “On New Democracy,” which Mao authored in the midst of a Communist guerrilla war to offer an analysis of the current political situation.¹³² The essay dealt with a number of crucial issues: an analysis of the events that had led up to the present impasse of the movement, the strategies and tactics to be employed, and the social and political future of China. It began with a discussion of the brief upsurge of rebel activism in the wake of the Wuhan Incident in late July 1967, in which the local PLA units defied the Maoist leadership, and expressed puzzlement about the unmistakable retrenchment of the Cultural Revolution: “When the struggle against the adverse current reached July, August, and September, the people

had a sense of vigorous growth, believing that there was hope for the Great Cultural Revolution being ‘carried through to the end.’ . . . However, an adverse current of top-down counterrevolutionary reformism has appeared since October. An atmosphere of class compromise, calling for ‘an end to the first cultural revolution,’ suddenly became intense. The people are thrown into bewilderment. . . . The question again arises: What is to be done? Whither China?”¹³³

“Whither China?” analyzed the major events of the Cultural Revolution through the viewpoint of a class-based revolt against China’s bureaucratic ruling elites, taking as the starting point the first wall poster that appeared at Beijing University in May 1966, which Mao glowingly praised as “the manifesto of the Beijing People’s Commune.”¹³⁴ For Yang, however, Mao’s envisioning of the future society and polity, wherein people would be free from the domination of the bureaucratic ruling elite, was rather vague: “As regards this crucial subject of where China is going, the great teacher of the world proletariat, Comrade Mao Zedong, evidently has made only some abstract predictions. . . . Because the revolution had developed only to a very low level, almost no one understood the goal of the first Cultural Revolution as pointed out by Chairman Mao. People regarded this statement by Chairman Mao as merely words of general praise and gradually forgot about it.”¹³⁵ Yang’s interpretation of the January episode of the Cultural Revolution is interesting in this regard. For Yang, the January Revolution proved that the people could live better in the absence of bureaucrats. The critical fact was the “changes in class relations that took place”—that “90 percent of the senior cadres were made to stand aside . . . and their power was reduced to zero.” “Into whose hands did the [power and] property go? They went into the hands of the people . . . who organized to take over the urban administration and party, government, financial, and cultural powers.” Yang argued that the goal called for by Mao, that “the masses should rise and take hold of the destiny of their country and themselves,” was in fact realized—if only briefly—during the January Revolution: “The January Storm transferred [power and property] from the bureaucrats to the working class in a very short period of time. Society suddenly found, in the absence of bureaucrats, that it could not only go on, but could go on better and develop more quickly and with greater freedom. . . . All departments of Hunan’s party committees fell, but various branches of their work went on as usual. Moreover, the working classes were greatly liberated in their initiative. The management of plants by the workers was impressive. For the first time, the workers had the feeling that ‘it is not the state which manages us, but we who manage the

state.’”¹³⁶ Indeed, once the bewildering concatenation of events became a thing with its own name, the January Revolution, the model thus produced would be susceptible to local adaptations by a variety of agents, each with a distinctive identity and interpretive outlook.

Believing that Mao had been in favor of the original Shanghai Commune, Yang had difficulty explaining why he had turned against the Paris Commune model of political organization: “Why did Chairman Mao, who strongly advocated the ‘commune,’ suddenly oppose the establishment of the Shanghai Commune in January? This is something the revolutionary people have found hard to understand.” Yang’s answer was both ingenious and wishful. He argued that, first, the Chinese proletariat was still immature, and its consciousness “had not yet developed to the degree at which it was possible to transform society.”¹³⁷ Second, the military posed an insurmountable obstacle: “The January Storm did not touch on this vital problem of all revolutions—the problem of the army.” The Cultural Revolution, Yang argued, had entered a stage where it became necessary to transform the coercive arm of the state “in order to rectify the antagonistic relationships between the people and an army under bureaucratic control.”¹³⁸ Because the Shanghai Commune had failed in this respect, Mao had no choice but to postpone the commune type of polity. “At this time complete victory is impossible,” Yang wrote, and “to try to achieve real victory is leftist adventurism.” It was for this reason, Yang naively believed, that Mao ordered the PLA to become involved in the Cultural Revolution, as a strategy to break the bureaucratic control of the army: “Therefore, Comrade Mao Zedong . . . did not hesitate in the least to go against the dream, cherished by immature revolutionaries, for the immediate establishment of communes. He adopted the correct strategy to call upon the army to ‘support the left,’ which is Chairman Mao’s ingenious means of carrying out a cultural revolution in the PLA.”¹³⁹

Yang believed that it was Mao himself who had called for the mass seizure of arms in the wake of the PLA resistance in the Wuhan Incident, and this marked the “emergence of an armed force organized by the revolutionary people.” In late 1967, the Shengwulian ultraleftists organized a drive to conceal arms and ammunitions from the military in preparation for armed struggles. Yang regarded the official drive to confiscate firearms as a plot and political betrayal: “To seize the fruits of victory won by the proletariat and turn the mass dictatorship again into bureaucratic rule, the bourgeoisie in the revolutionary committees must first disarm the working class.” The result was thus the usurpation of power by the “red capitalist

class." In what Yang called the "September setback," "the working class was disarmed, and the bureaucrats came back to power."¹⁴⁰

The brunt of the criticism developed in "Whither China?" was aimed at the revolutionary committees that were being installed in Hunan and across the country as new organs of local political authority. In Yang's view, the revolutionary committee was a product of political compromise, if not a sheer retreat. He speculated that in endorsing the revolutionary committee, Mao perhaps was attempting to circumvent the opposition and preserve the revolutionary forces so that "the splendid name of 'commune' would not be tarnished by faulty practice." Yang offered an apology, and perhaps at the same time a veiled criticism, of Mao's retreat: "Comrade Mao Zedong once again made a broad retreat after September, in disregard of the wishes of those eager for unrealistic victories, so as to consolidate the achievements already gained and calm the bourgeoisie in order to prevent them from taking reckless measures. A political structure for seizure of power by the bourgeoisie—the revolutionary committee or preparatory revolutionary committee—has been established. . . . The extent of this retreat was unprecedented."¹⁴¹ For Yang, the revolutionary committee created a regime dominated by PLA officers and civilian bureaucrats. Because the old power holders continued to hold key positions in the new power structure, the bureaucratic ruling class or "red bourgeoisie" would regain its power. The so-called power seizures and the revolutionary committees were therefore an inherently limited solution to the current political impasse. They were, in Yang's words, "a product of the 'revolution of dismissing officials' . . . that did not resolve the acute antagonism between the new bourgeoisie and the people." "The revolution of dismissing officials is only bourgeois reformism that, in a zigzag fashion, changes the new bureaucratic bourgeois rule prior to the Cultural Revolution into another type of bourgeois rule by bourgeois bureaucrats and a few token mass representatives."¹⁴² The so-called power seizures, according to a text titled "A Manifesto on the Current Situation" and later attributed to Yang Xiguang, "were merely the substitution of a new dynasty for the old [*gaichao huandai*] that either made merely cosmetic changes or simply changed nothing. . . . What were changed were merely minor aspects of the old order, not its substance."¹⁴³

Expressing dissatisfaction with the direction of the Cultural Revolution, "Whither China?" criticized the "doctrine of two revolutions" (*erci geming lun*), a widely held notion among many rebels that because the first cultural revolution was winding down, achieving major political changes would have to await some future occasion. "People's minds are greatly confused. Almost unanimously they say: 'The first cultural revolution can

do only so much. There is nothing we can do except wait for the second revolution.’” To the contrary, Yang argued that the tasks to be accomplished as the end of the movement must be determined by the basic antagonisms that had given rise to the Cultural Revolution in the first place: “the social contradictions between the masses and the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie.” “This means overthrow of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie, complete redistribution of power and property, and the establishment of a new society—the ‘People’s Commune of China.’” Until these goals were accomplished, Yang concluded, “the Cultural Revolution cannot be brought to an end.”¹⁴⁴

In his call to carry out the Cultural Revolution to the end, Yang placed great hope in the political agency of the marginalized elements in Chinese society. In an essay titled “Report of an Investigation of the Rusticated Youth Movement in Changsha,” completed in late 1967 and apparently modeled on Mao’s essay on the Hunan peasant movement, Yang claimed that the rusticated youth “formed a massive revolutionary force that caused all of society to tremble before it.”¹⁴⁵ Praising the rusticates’ rebellion against the *hukou* system and their desire to dismantle the rustication system, Yang argued that the rusticates’ protest movement “most clearly reveals the arousal of the sharpest social questions of the Cultural Revolution and most truly illustrates its theoretical nature.”¹⁴⁶ Yang claimed that the rusticates’ mobilization represented a widening of the Cultural Revolution, indicating that the movement “is moving from the upper and middle strata of society toward the lower levels, and from the cities to the villages.” For the first time, he wrote, “the rusticated youth movement has brought onto the political stage the peasants’ fierce demands for change. The rusticated youth have moved from the cities to the villages, trapped in the acute contradictions of the three great differences. They have witnessed the extreme manifestations of inequality: the city exploiting the countryside, mental labor exploiting manual labor, and excessive price disparities between industrial and agricultural products. . . . In calling for changes to be brought about amid the Cultural Revolution, their burgeoning movement has reflected this fierce demand and portends a storm of peasant revolution.”¹⁴⁷ Yang also urged the rusticates to carry out extensive social investigations to discover the “real causes” of their hardships.¹⁴⁸ Like Yu Luo, discussed in Chapter 3, who criticized the bloodline theory on behalf of the black youth who were discriminated against, Yang linked the rusticates’ apparently particular or particularistic grievances to a broader political critique, arguing that the rusticates’ struggles formed an integral part of transforming Chinese society and polity through removing the bureaucratic ruling class from power:

A new capitalist class has been formed in Chinese society: a privileged stratum. The form of China's existent political power is essentially that of a bureaucratic structure; the privileged stratum that controls this structure is a mountain weighing on the Chinese people. By having the cities exploit the villages, they fill their wallets; their high salaries are the blood and sweat of the workers, peasants, and rusticated youth. The contradiction between the great mass of laboring people and this privileged stratum is becoming increasingly acute. . . . The rusticated youth are pressed by the privileged stratum to the lowest levels of society; they are its cheap labor force. All year long they cannot provide for themselves; they have neither a tile over their heads nor a speck of dirt under their feet. It is not that they are unwilling to work hard, so why is it they cannot provide for themselves? It is because the privileged stratum employs every ingenious method to exhaust their blood and sweat.

Therefore, Yang argued, "the rusticated youth must overturn the great mountain pressing atop their heads—the privileged stratum's bureaucratic organization. This is in fact the real cause and immediate goal of the Cultural Revolution."¹⁴⁹

Among Shengwulian activists and sympathizers, Yang Xiguang was not the only one who produced dangerous political ideas. Similar analyses were articulated by several college students, such as Zhou Guohui and Zhang Yugang, who played active roles in Hunan's mass politics. Zhou, a sophomore who led the University Storm and Thunder, a student group active in the Xiang River coalition, authored several widely circulated speeches in which he harshly criticized revolutionary committees for being "dominated by the capitalist power holders."¹⁵⁰ Zhang, an engineering student, drew up in late 1967 an essay titled "Our Program," in which he argued that "although China's economic infrastructure is still generally socialist, its entire vast superstructure has largely become capitalist." As a result, "this social revolution—the Cultural Revolution—is in substance the real beginning of the socialist revolution," a statement that in effect called into question the socialist character of the Chinese state.¹⁵¹ Zhang claimed that the goal of the Cultural Revolution was to "overthrow the newly born corrupted bourgeois privileged stratum" and to "smash the old state apparatus that serves bourgeois privilege."¹⁵² Zhang contended that despite the mass movement unleashed by the Cultural Revolution, "many still have a very poor understanding of its objectives, and their revolts against the privileged stratum have been limited to changing the immediate circumstances in which they suffer repression . . . but have barely touched on the social-class origins of the reactionary line, as well as the bureaucratic institutions that serve it." Therefore, "the seizure of power

was regarded mostly as the dismissal of individual officials from their offices, and not as the overthrow of the privileged stratum and the smashing of the old state machine." Asserting that "the political power is still in the hands of the bureaucrats, and the seizure of power is a change in appearance only whose nature is reformist," Zhang declared that the Cultural Revolution "only begins from the present moment. . . . The movement in the whole is still in its rudimentary stage. Its historical mission is far from fulfilled. The long march of ten thousand *li* has made only its very first step."¹⁵³

Mao had indeed stressed the corruptibility of cadres and their progeny, who he believed might evolve into a new privileged stratum or ruling class. But Mao insisted on differentiating the majority of good cadres from the bad ones. For the young Hunanese critics, this formula was far from satisfactory. In their view, what was at issue was neither the hidden landlords or capitalists conspiring against the revolution nor the cadres degenerating into the enemy of the revolution. The main challenge facing the Cultural Revolution was decidedly not purging individual bureaucrats but rather the removal of the new ruling class produced by the very social formation spawned by the revolution. The Maoist doctrine of the Cultural Revolution was therefore limited in both social analysis and political vision. "Whither China?" argued that the Cultural Revolution should not be a movement of using "some bureaucrats to attack other bureaucrats," in however violent fashion, but rather a social revolution in which "one class overthrows another." "This is the first time the revolutionary people have tried to overthrow their powerful enemies," wrote Yang. "[But] how shall their knowledge of this revolution was! Not only did they fail to consciously understand the necessity to completely smash the old state machinery and to overhaul the social system, they also did not even recognize the fact that their enemy formed a class. The revolutionary ranks were dominated by ideas of 'revolution to dismiss officials' [*baguan gemin*] and 'revolution to drag out people' [*jiuren gemin*]. . . . Therefore, in the final analysis, the fruit of the revolution was taken away by the capitalist class."¹⁵⁴ The political awakening of the masses, for Yang, found its expression in the new ideas emerging from the mass movement: "'The new trends of thought,' reviled by the enemies as the 'ultraleft trends of thought' (i.e., 'overthrowing the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie,' 'abolishing bureaucratic organs,' 'thoroughly smashing the state machinery'), roam among the revolutionary people like a 'specter.' The ideological weapon of the revolutionary people in winning victory in the great proletarian socialist revolution has begun to appear in a new form."¹⁵⁵ Intriguingly, the dynamic term "trends of thought" (*sichao*) was contrasted with the static

“Thought” (*sixiang*) officially used to canonize Maoism. By late 1967, the line of political and ideological demarcation had become clearly visible.

In resisting mass demobilization and political recentralization, some Shengwulian activists sailed into ideologically perilous waters. One of their main concerns was how a more vibrant and open socialism from below might prevail over hierarchy and state-imposed regimentation. What would a society without bureaucratic domination be like? How should Chinese society be managed after the abrupt breakdown of the statist order? Yang and his comrades used the achievement of a genuine popular democracy as the criterion for assessing the Cultural Revolution. From the ivory tower of contemporary academia, their ideas might appear to be fragmentary and unsophisticated. For example, although these critics were ardently critical of both bureaucratic-socialist and capitalist regimes, they developed no alternative economic ideas, nor did they form any idea of a comprehensive social program. They came to demand equality and redistribution of power and property but rarely thought—let alone carefully—about specific institutional arrangements of political participation and governance. And they impetuously called for armed struggle when violent factional clashes were bringing the country to the brink of civil war. Their views were generally improvised during the most tumultuous months of the Cultural Revolution and had little time to systematize or mature. In particular, their radical antibureaucratic critique was seriously contradicted by their own attempt to uphold Mao as the supreme revolutionary leader. And although they contested the idea of rebuilding the party-state, they nevertheless advocated the establishment of a new party of Mao Zedongism “in order to realize Comrade Mao Zedong’s leadership in the Party . . . and to fulfill the task of the Cultural Revolution.”¹⁵⁶ This stance is without doubt self-contradictory. But taken as a whole, these viewpoints with all their fragmentedness and contradictions powerfully expressed the inherent limits of late Maoism as it was being pushed practically to the point of explosion.

The Universality of the Singular

The ideas of Yang Xiguang and his peers marked the emergence of an alternative interpretation of the Cultural Revolution. They contributed to the construction of a language of critique through which individual or particular struggles could be widened and connected to one another, and to the development of a new political analysis of China’s state-socialist order, in which class power directly took the form of state power. Subver-

sive ideas such as the “bureaucratic capitalist class” served the crucial articulating function of establishing a relation among diverse grievances and demands such that their meanings were modified as the result of the articulatory practice. In the motion and exchange between the local and national, the partial and the total, general causes were joined symbolically with these particular demands and had powerful consequences for the ways local events unfolded. The important question raised by the Shengwulian episode therefore pertains to how specific grievances that demanded political expression became the general concern of a politicized public, and, more important, how local, particular, or singular issues, when absorbed into larger processes and causes, are able to inject new meaning into the latter, sometimes with profoundly transformative effects.

During late 1967 and early 1968, a significant political cleavage was tentatively in the making, and an alternative ideological logic emerged. The combination of locally based demands and the development of novel political ideas that informed and gave new meanings to specific incidents and grievances had a potentially explosive impact on the mass politics of the Cultural Revolution. But such ruptural moments did not materialize. Condemned as anarchist and antiparty, these critical currents were swiftly crushed by national and local authorities. The political and theoretical activities of the activists were suppressed ruthlessly. They were denounced for calling for the discarding of party leadership and deliberately propagating a false image of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic class. With the reassertion of bureaucratic centralization and interpretive control, critical voices emergent in the movement were silenced, and political orthodoxy was reimposed.

The sword of Damocles fell on the Shengwulian only a few weeks after “Whither China?” was completed. Hua Guofeng, a provincial party boss who would later become Mao’s successor, concluded after reading the essay that the Shengwulian was not only “counterrevolutionary in action” but also “reactionary in thought.”¹⁵⁷ At a conference in Beijing on January 24, 1968, top leaders, such as Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng, Yao Wenyuan, Chen Boda, and Zhou Enlai, unanimously accused the Shengwulian of every heinous political crime imaginable. “Whither China?,” in the words of Kang Sheng, “is opposed to our great, glorious, and correct party and opposed to our peerless Chairman Mao, who has creatively developed Marxism-Leninism. . . . Not only is this opposed to the Cultural Revolution; it also repudiates the entire revolution that has been going on for decades in China.”¹⁵⁸ Suggesting that the Hunanese critics had been influenced by Trotskyism, Kang refused to believe that ideas like these could have been produced by some middle-school students: “This theory absolutely

could not have been written by a middle-school student, or even by a university student. There must be counterrevolutionary black hands manipulating them from behind.” The following exchange between the senior party leaders and the audience is worth quoting at length because it fully discloses the mind-set of those leaders, who had never failed to profess their faith in popular initiatives:

(Kang Sheng) I have noticed that Lenin is quoted: “A quotation from Lenin is very applicable to our state organs: ‘Our machinery of state . . . is very largely a survival of the past and has least of all undergone serious changes. It has only been slightly touched upon the surface, but in all other respects it is a most typical relic of the old state machine.’”

I say that this is not the writing of a middle-school student or even a university student. I can prove it. Do any of you comrades present know what article by Lenin this statement is in, and when it was written?

(Premier Zhou: “Can anybody answer?”)

(Audience: “No.”)

(Premier Zhou: “Middle-school students cannot answer. Can cadres in government departments answer?”)

(Kang Sheng) This passage was originally in Lenin’s proposal at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1923. . . . Lenin wrote this article with absolutely nothing of the meaning of Mr. Theoretician of the Shengwulian. What Lenin was talking about was the judicial organs of the Soviet Union, which, at the time, were not effectively suppressing the counterrevolutionaries. . . . The Shengwulian distorted and vilified Lenin’s words, and by using Lenin’s words this way, went against the proletarian dictatorship. They truly deserve ten thousand deaths for this crime!

(Long and enthusiastic applause from the audience)

(Kang Sheng) If any of you still have doubts, please consult Volume 33 of Lenin’s *Complete Works*. Then you’ll be able to understand how vicious the tricks of these counterrevolutionaries are! They take advantage of the ignorance of middle-school students and young people about Marxism-Leninism in order to oppose our proletarian dictatorship. Comrades, even you didn’t recognize this piece, you didn’t know this article of Lenin’s. Therefore, I say to you that this document could not possibly have been written by a middle-school student, or even by a university student.

In particular, Kang Sheng attacked the idea that a “newborn capitalist privileged stratum” had emerged in China and that the goal of the Cultural Revolution was to “smash the old state apparatus” and topple the new ruling elite, condemning it as “insane,” “shameless,” and “thoroughly reactionary.” Chen Boda, head of the CCRG, portrayed the Shengwulian as “a hodgepodge of social dregs left from the Old Society” and urged that the organization be immediately disbanded. Although there is no indica-

tion that Mao personally authorized the suppression of the Shengwulian, he clearly was well aware of the developments in his home province and the threat they posed. At the historic meeting with Red Guard leaders in Beijing six months later, which effectively marked the end of the Red Guard movement (see Chapter 6), Mao made a disparaging reference to the “Shengwulian-style hodgepodge.”¹⁵⁹ And during his visit to Hunan in June 1969, Mao again made reference to the “ultraleftist current of the Shengwulian,” noting that it “attempted in vain to reconstruct the party and the army.”¹⁶⁰

On January 26, 1968, over 100,000 people attended a mass rally in Changsha. General Li Yuan, head of the Preparatory Revolutionary Committee, declared that the Shengwulian was a “hodgepodge of social dregs” consisting of “landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, unrepentant capitalist roaders, KMT remnants, and Trotskyist bandits” and ordered that the group’s views and activities be “resolutely and thoroughly discredited and purged.” At the rally, several groups affiliated with the Shengwulian repented for having allowed themselves to be hoodwinked and solemnly vowed to join the battle against the black hands.¹⁶¹ The provincial authorities mounted a drive to denounce the Shengwulian, and numerous rallies were staged to condemn the group for “negating the great, glorious, and correct Chinese Communist Party, the great socialist country, and the great People’s Liberation Army.”¹⁶² Documents produced by Shengwulian activists were duplicated and distributed to government offices, factories, and schools to be scrutinized at mandatory study sessions that ironically made it possible for “poisonous weeds” such as “Whither China?” to circulate widely and gain influence not only in the province but also across the country.¹⁶³

When the bad news reached Hunan, Yang Xiguang went into hiding. After staying for a month in Changsha with Shengwulian supporters, he fled north and was captured in Wuhan by police agents and PLA soldiers, and remained in prison until the close of the Mao era.¹⁶⁴ Searches of the building once occupied by Yang’s group reportedly discovered “black materials used in bombarding the proletarian headquarters, as well as confidential party and state documents they had stolen, rifles and pistols, over 10,000 rounds of ammunition, cases of hand grenades, a large quantity of radio communication equipment, a metal case full of gold, silver, and jewelry, and other military equipment.”¹⁶⁵ In the meantime, a witch hunt was under way to uncover the hidden class enemies behind the Shengwulian. Yang’s parents fell under immediate suspicion. His mother was interrogated and denounced at numerous public meetings, and was forced to confess that she was indeed the black hand behind her son’s activities.

Tormented and under extreme duress, she committed suicide. By late February, the Shengwulian had been largely destroyed, and most of its leaders had been arrested. The suppression paved the way for the restoration of order in Hunan. On February 21, 1968, both the Workers' Alliance and the Xiang River, together with ten other major mass organizations, announced their dissolution, "with all members returning to their original work units to participate in the great alliance." This, as a post-Mao party history put it, showed that "the assorted 'rebel' organizations that had been active on Hunan's political stage for the past year and half would dissolve and fade out."¹⁶⁶ Six weeks later, on April 8, the Hunan Provincial Revolutionary Committee officially came into being, thereby symbolizing the achievement of political unity and order in the province.¹⁶⁷

THE SHENGWULIAN CASE mediated and articulated a number of grievances and discontents that erupted during the Cultural Revolution, both locally and nationally. In Hunan, however, rebel militancy that resulted from the fracturing of mass politics may not be directly explained by the social divisions established in Chinese society before 1966, as some scholars have previously argued, according to whom the activists' political orientations and actions were shaped by their positions in the pre-Cultural Revolution status quo. Rather, the emergent positions, identities, and politics of the recalcitrant rebels were the products of contingent, open-ended political processes that brought a variety of aspirations and demands into play. What is crucial is not merely the specificity and plurality of the struggles but also, more important, the overdetermined relations that diverse struggles established among themselves, as well as the unforeseeable generalizing effects that might follow.

Many of the conflicts in the Cultural Revolution were local or particular and involved specific groups making differential demands apparently unrelated to the others. However, a new discursive horizon opened up when singular events made implicit (or even explicit) references to broader social conditions and political issues and came to be associated with the development of a powerful critique of the existing structure of power. Through the critics' creative reinterpretations of Maoist doctrine, local events and antagonisms were emptied of their contextual specificities and became emblems of new, wider struggles. Aggregated into conflicts only indirectly or even remotely connected to the originally dispersed incidents and grievances, individual struggles cumulatively became simplified and more abstract and ended as tokens in a remapped political space polarized into the people and the new ruling class.¹⁶⁸ As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argued, no political movements can ever remain confined within themselves. Through constant motion among diverse struggles, they are

often transformed into examples and symbols of a broader resistance, “thus fueling and giving birth to other movements.”¹⁶⁹ Mao and other national leaders well understood the political dangers that might result from the unforeseen convergence of an increasingly unruly mass movement, widespread social antagonisms, and catalyzing heterodox ideas. By swiftly suppressing the Shengwulian, they expediently averted a potentially explosive political situation.

COPING WITH CRISIS IN THE WAKE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Historical Origins of Chinese Postsocialism

Rebellion and Encompassment

Turbulent times encourage a profusion of new possibilities. The Shengwulian episode marked an emergent tendency in the Cultural Revolution in which politically explosive ideas such as the privileged stratum or new ruling class became a critical line of ideological demarcation. Yang Xiguang and his Hunanese peers were not the only ones who saw the Cultural Revolution's main antagonism as the struggle between the Chinese working people and the new ruling class. Similar ideas were developed elsewhere in China, for example, in Beijing by the April 3 Faction. Also, in Shanghai some students formed the Anti-restoration Society in August 1967—by coincidence, on the eve of the suppression of the Lian Si-led opposition. Its manifesto contended that Chinese society had undergone “profound changes in class relations.” In this view, party cadres had vested interests in the established system, which explained why many of them had become conservative, while those who had suffered injustice had become the backbone of rebellion. Inviting young people and even self-proclaimed “madmen” (*kuangwang ren*) to join the venture of exploring the possibility of a “second Great Cultural Revolution,” it called for “innovative theoretical work” and “creative understanding of Chairman Mao’s theory of the continuous revolution” in order to rectify the disappointing situation in which “isolated statements in Marxist classics are mechanically memorized” and “theoretical work lags behind rich developments of the movement.”¹

In Shandong, members of the Bohai Battle Regiment and the October Revolution Group openly sympathized with the ideas developed by the Shengwulian critics, and some visited Changsha and met with the local rebels. Liu Jinchang, a female middle-school student, admonished her Hunanese ultraleft comrades to “learn from the painful lessons of Shandong,” where “power seizures had already degenerated into the restoration of capitalism.”² The Shandong activists expressed skepticism whether post-1949 China was socialist and called for “thoroughly smashing the existing party and state apparatus.” “This present revolution,” in the words of Qiu Liming, a college student, “definitely cannot be called the Great Cultural Revolution, insofar as there has been no indication that this is a great ‘social revolution’ . . . that aims at abolishing the bureaucracy and bureaucrats.”³ In Wuhan, members of the Big Dipper Society, which was formed in late 1967, criticized the national trend toward mass demobilization and political recentralization, arguing that the establishment of revolutionary committees marked the abandonment of the Paris Commune principle, and that the Cultural Revolution should be a thorough social revolution in which China’s working masses rose up to topple the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie. In order for such a revolution to occur, they claimed, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) must be radically reformed or even be dismantled and replaced by a people’s militia. The existing Communist Party must also undergo revolutionary changes, and radical rebels like themselves should become the nucleus of a reorganized party. In defiance of Beijing, the Wuhan activists advocated further widening the mass movement from urban to rural areas, from student and worker movements to a peasant movement, in which the Chinese peasants—“the most exploited and oppressed social class in Chinese society”—would become the most radical force in the new surge of a revolutionary movement.⁴

Such critical trends of thought were already tentatively in the making in the early months of the Cultural Revolution. As early as late August 1966, two Beijing University students, Qiao Jianwu and Du Wenge, sent an open letter to Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee calling for replacing China’s party and state organizations with “revolutionary committees created by the masses themselves . . . and constituted through general election of the Paris Commune type.” They contended that the current party and state bureaucracies “were not subject to the supervision of the masses” and “had estranged the leaders from the people they led.” “Although the vanguard Communist Party was instrumental before the proletariat’s seizure of power,” their letter claimed, “the party and youth league organizations . . . have now completely lost their rationale of continued existence and have become the obstacle to socialist revolution

and construction.”⁵ In mid-October, a physics student at Beijing Normal University named Li Wenbo penned an essay titled “The Commune Is No Longer a State in Its Original Sense,” denouncing China’s political system as “a capitalist state without a bourgeois class” and calling for “reforming the socialist system” in accordance with the principles of the Paris Commune.⁶ Inspired by Qiao, Du, and Li’s ideas, two middle-school students in Beijing attempted to reinterpret one of the most sacrosanct slogans in the Cultural Revolution, “Bombard the headquarters.” Under the pseudonym Yilin Dixi, which combined one of Lenin’s pen names with the reported early pen name of Mao, they sent an open letter to Lin Biao criticizing him for interpreting Mao’s ideas too narrowly and “without deep understanding,” and arguing that Lin’s idolization of Mao and his words could not help solve China’s problems. Stressing that the significance of Mao’s slogan did not lie in removing “a few capitalist roaders in the party” and attacking “the reactionary bourgeoisie, landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, and rightists,” as Lin Biao had claimed, they argued that the Cultural Revolution had demonstrated that “the socialist system must be reformed, and the party and the state need to be fundamentally transformed. For the past seventeen years, the organizational forms of the People’s Republic of China . . . have already become obsolete. We must create a brand-new state . . . to replace the old one.”⁷ Claiming that the Paris Commune model must be extended to the entire structure of state and societal organizations, the authors sincerely believed that Mao was leading the Cultural Revolution precisely in this direction.

Those who advocated radically reforming Chinese socialism in accordance with the Paris Commune principle were among the first wave of critics who emerged from the Cultural Revolution. What happened between late 1966 and early 1968 was that these scandalous ideas were no longer crafted merely by some politically sensitive or intellectually precocious students preoccupied with studying Marxian classics but became absorbed into an increasingly unruly mass movement in which people sought to give new meanings to their own rapidly changing political circumstances.

Although skeptical students in the early months of the Cultural Revolution and the later Shengwulian critics shared much with Maoist criticism of the bureaucratization of socialism, Mao interpreted the continuous revolution in a way significantly different from the interpretation of those who took up his call for rebellion. In a speech delivered in late February 1967, Zhang Chunqiao, who was still consolidating his power as Shanghai’s new party boss, reported Mao’s recent thoughts regarding the Cultural Revolution. Evidently in response to the emerging “anarchic currents,” Mao claimed that the Cultural Revolution should be properly

understood as a revolution under “the dictatorship of the proletariat,” which in Chinese political jargon referred to the vanguard party and state organs. According to Zhang, Mao believed that the view that “the proletarian dictatorship must be radically transformed [*chedi gaishan*]” was “reactionary.” As Zhang paraphrased Mao, “This amounts to overthrowing the proletarian dictatorship. . . . In fact, the correct view is that it only needs to be ‘partially reformed’ [*bufen gaishan*].”⁸ Mao’s reluctance to radically transform the party-state must be considered in its specific historical context. Mao clearly shared with many grassroots rebels an aversion to bureaucratic prerogatives and a fondness for direct political action. But in contrast to those who attempted to continue the revolution to the end by all means necessary or at all cost—including disrupting the national economy or even stirring up a civil war—Mao’s views and actions were constrained by his responsibility of maintaining public order and national security. Mao, as Richard Kraus has noted, was both the “chief cadre” of the bureaucracy that he personally embodied and its “leading rebel.”⁹ The difference between Mao and his unruly followers, as Joel Andreas aptly put it, may be seen as the difference “between Maoism in power and Maoism in opposition”¹⁰—or, if I may rephrase, as the difference between revolutionaries in power and revolutionaries in opposition.

No easy summary can be offered of the transgressive tendencies precipitated in the tumultuous mass movement. Their diversity and complexity defy simple generalization but are perhaps the movement’s most important characteristics. Showing a surge of political feeling among a variety of people, including students, workers, and other ordinary citizens, the mood among many of these discontented rebels was one of intense expectation and hope for better things to come. China’s new revolution was to open up an exciting horizon. The world would be a better one, they sincerely believed, when enemies of the revolution had been defeated and noble transformations had been achieved. Surely much in their political outlook was rudimentary, as most were socialists more by upbringing and good faith than by critical reasoning and sustained reflection. Their lofty ideals may have been sheer fantasies, and their insurrectionary aspirations may have been foolhardy. Furthermore, they often found themselves in situations in which actions had to be improvised under the pressure of immediate circumstances. But for many, the horizon as encapsulated by the formula of the “People’s Commune of China” had great appeal and made strenuous exertion worthwhile. It is easy in retrospect to see such spirit and energy as naive or utopian, but there is little in it that should entitle us to regard it with academic snobbery. Indeed, it was really the incipient divergence from below that put Mao’s last revolution to its definitive test. Cannibalizing its

own unruly children, Maoism inescapably exhausted its political and ideological energy.

It is beyond doubt that the freedom to organize enjoyed briefly by China's urban populace during the Cultural Revolution was unparalleled in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The mass movement that it unleashed made possible popular resistance to the party-state. The antiauthoritarian potential of the Cultural Revolution was admitted even by fervently anti-Communist commentators who were honest enough to recognize the paradox of the "totalitarian great enslaver" who called for rebellion against the apparatus of power, and who "in his own way taught the Chinese people to think and act for themselves." As the party-state broke down, "people no longer had to wait for someone to instruct them what to do—Mao had told them they had 'the right to rebel.' . . . In one magnificent stroke, the Great Helmsman had delegitimized almost all forms of authority."¹¹

The Cultural Revolution's challenge to major aspects of China's state-socialist system pertains particularly to the image of the political body. In his discussion of Soviet-style regimes, Claude Lefort described the political body of the Leninist party-state as based on a series of synecdochic relationships, through which the head represents and fuses with the body.¹² The proletariat, however delimited, is the head of the people and stands for the people as a whole. In the same way, the vanguard party—in its claim to superior political knowledge—represents and heads the proletariat, the leadership heads the party, and the omnipotent leader (or "Ego-crat" in Lefort's terminology) heads the leadership as the ultimate embodiment of the "People-as-One." During the Cultural Revolution, this synecdochic chain was disrupted. When the Leader abruptly separated himself from the party, the latter's representational authority vis-à-vis the proletariat and the people also was thrown into doubt. This disruption, however, was not only brief but also limited in scope. Although several key links of the synecdochic chain were abruptly severed, its very existence—its rationale and political logic—was hardly seriously questioned. In fact, the disorder was justified in the name of guarding the fundamental existence of the totality and maintaining its unity. Paradoxically unleashing rebellion against authority while at the same time being encompassed by authority, this disruption constituted, to borrow a concept from anthropologist Max Gluckman, "a drama of kingship" in which the affirmation of rebellion and protest goes on "within an accepted order," wherein even if the rebels "don't support the particular king, they support the kingship."¹³

Although the Cultural Revolution largely failed to accomplish its declared goals of advancing mass democratic participation, Mao's direct ap-

peal to students, workers, and ordinary Chinese was remarkably effective in undermining the party bureaucracy. The brief paralysis of the Communist Party was part of a complex and volatile process in which the locus of authority was separated from the party apparatus and transferred to the Leader. One of the main contradictions of the Cultural Revolution, as Graham Young aptly pointed out, lay in the dramatic separation of ideological leadership from the party's organizational structure, which resulted in the crystallization of ideological authority in Mao, on the one hand, and the vastly enhanced significance of mass activity, on the other.¹⁴ In this view, the much-exalted "great democracy" or more or less unrestrained, extra-party mass politics characteristic of the Cultural Revolution may be viewed as the direct integration of Mao's ideological authority with the mass movement, unmediated by the party apparatus. Superior political understanding was no longer the exclusive possession of the vanguard party, and the masses—largely independent of guidance by party and state organizations—were granted the primary responsibility of continuing the revolution. The people were emancipated from the party, and likewise the Leader was also able to transcend established bureaucratic structures and constraints.

Undermined from above by the Leader's withdrawal of support and challenged from below by mass activities, the paramount position that the party normally enjoyed was severely weakened. Mao's words and ideas became the sole criterion for judging the legitimacy of political authority, including that of the party. As the party apparatus virtually collapsed, Mao's personal and ideological authority appeared to reign supreme. Although rebels attacked party and state organizations, loyalty to Mao as the supreme leader and to the party as an abstract entity remained largely unquestioned. The enhanced power of the Leader (as in the ubiquitous Mao cult), however, was simultaneously—and paradoxically—accompanied by the weakening of his interpretive authority. With the brief breakdown of the party-state, which normally interprets and enforces the Leader's messages, the Leader became an abstract symbol amenable to multiple interpretations, appropriations, and adaptations. In the absence of authoritative interpretations, groups with diverse social interests and political viewpoints took from Mao the fragments of ideas that most closely suited their own situations and reworked them—often out of context—into plausible interpretations. This breakdown of established political authorities and the concomitant conditions of interpretive indeterminacy and anarchy inevitably exacerbated conflicts in a violently divided mass movement.

From the standpoint of the Maoist leadership, this divisive and potentially explosive situation could be extremely dangerous. As national political

conditions became perilously chaotic, it was ironic that Mao's authority and his notoriously elusive Thought, once an inspiration for mass rebellion, transmogrified into an unabashed celebration of the life and feat of the "great savior," and elaborate rituals and ceremonies became the instruments with which the battered party-state could be reconstituted. "In 1966 the Mao cult had stimulated iconoclasts," as Maurice Meisner succinctly observed; "in 1968 it produced icons."¹⁵ In fact, it was no coincidence that the extravagant cult building that accelerated in late 1967 and culminated in 1968–1969 was undertaken just as the Maoist leadership was increasingly inclined toward retrenchment. After the termination of mass politics, interestingly, the scandalous separation of Mao's Thought and the party was mostly erased in the official discourse, and the reintegration of ideology and organization was portrayed without any sense of irony as the defining feature of the Cultural Revolution: "Some people say that 'revolution could be made without the leadership of party organizations.' This reflects the pernicious influence of the traitor Liu Shaoqi's idea that 'revolution need not be led by the party.' The leadership of the party is equal to Chairman Mao's leadership. The leadership of Mao Zedong Thought and the revolutionary line headed by Chairman Mao is achieved through the party, and through the party organizations leading the masses to implement the line, plans, and policies of Chairman Mao. The Cultural Revolution was undertaken under the leadership of the Party Center, headed by Chairman Mao and Vice Chairman Lin Biao."¹⁶ Despite its radical rhetoric, Mao's last revolution ended with the resurrection of the party, albeit severely disrupted. In hindsight, although the Cultural Revolution disclosed and challenged the problems of Chinese socialism in major ways, it failed to resolve them adequately. As the Hunanese student Yang Xiguang agonized in early 1968: "Social reforms were aborted, social changes were not consolidated and thoroughly realized, and the 'end' of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution has not been reached. As the masses have said, 'Everything remains the same after so much ado.'¹⁷

Return to Normalcy

From late 1967, much of the Cultural Revolution revolved around Beijing's efforts to rein in a divided mass movement. On January 1, 1968, the New Year editorial jointly issued by the *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* proclaimed that the task for the coming year would be to achieve "all-round victory."¹⁸ A national campaign to "encircle and suppress factionalism" began shortly after, in which "indiscipline" and "anarchism" were blamed

for obstructing achieving unity. Anarchism, as a *People's Daily* article stated, "is absolutely terrible. In politics, it negates everything; in production, it permits people to do whatever they please; it splits up organizations and undermines morale and discipline. Those who have deviated from the correct path create anarchy in the name of 'making rebellion' or 'self-emancipation,' and they are not even ashamed of doing so."¹⁹

By the summer of 1968, the mass movement had in large part worn out, and excitement diminished. Many dropped out of a movement of which they had grown increasingly weary. In Guangzhou, many students reportedly had turned politically apathetic, and some even adopted the view that "indolence is justified" (*tuifei youli*)—a pun on Mao's slogan "Rebellion is justified."²⁰ A small number, however, attempted to keep going—literally so, by crossing borders into Vietnam and Burma in order to continue a revolution that they felt was sputtering out. "The current political situation in China," a twenty-one-year-old Beijing student wrote in a letter dated June 1969 from a Communist guerrilla camp in the Burmese jungle, shortly before he was killed in combat, "necessitates the continuous transformation of a domestic revolutionary situation into wars abroad. . . . For those who attempt to put up a 'last fight' to break the unbearable pressure of the deadening life, this is perhaps the only hopeful outlet. Amid the fire and thunder of battles, the dying soul once again bursts into brilliant magnificence."²¹

Although some of the unyielding elements continued to battle, by the summer of 1968 the Cultural Revolution mass movement was all but over. The divisive factionalism of the Red Guards convinced an increasingly irritated Mao that they must be disbanded as an organized political force, by overwhelming force if necessary. On July 27, Mao dispatched a workers' militia to Tsinghua University, one of the remaining strongholds of Red Guard factional strife. Led by officers and soldiers from the 8341 Unit of the PLA—the special unit that guarded Mao's residence and CCP headquarters—some 30,000 workers drawn from sixty-one factories in Beijing were organized into Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams and sent to occupy the Tsinghua campus and pacify the warring students. Upon arriving at the campus, however, the workers were greeted with slingshots, bricks, grenades, and gunshots from intransigent and confused students, who thought that they were being attacked by supporters of their rivals. Five workers were killed, and several hundred were injured.²²

Mao, according to his official biographers, was furious upon learning about the clash.²³ In an unprecedented five-hour meeting with a group of Beijing Red Guard leaders, Mao delivered a very harsh message to his Red Guard interlocutors that, in the words of Stuart Schram, "the party was

over and the activities in which they had been indulging for the past two years would no longer be tolerated.”²⁴ When Kuai Dafu, the Tsinghua student leader, pleaded to Mao for help and protested that their suppression was orchestrated by certain black hands, Mao replied curtly: “Who is the black hand? The black hand is nobody else but me!” The Chairman then demanded that he himself be arrested and “taken to the Municipal Garrison.” Mao explained to the Red Guard leaders present that factional conflicts had to stop: “The masses don’t like civil wars. . . . The people are unhappy, the workers are unhappy, the peasants are unhappy. The Beijing residents are unhappy, the students in most schools are unhappy.” Mao also invoked Hunan’s Shengwulian as an example of Red Guard unruliness, calling one of the student groups in Beijing “a Shengwulian-style hodgepodge.”²⁵ During the meeting, Mao issued a stern warning: “Those who continue to rebel, fight with the PLA, undermine communications and transportation, engage in murder or arson, will be treated as criminals. If some people refuse to heed warnings, they will be treated as bandits, or as the KMT [Kuomintang]. They will be encircled, and if they resist, it will be necessary to destroy them.” Mao indicated to the Red Guard leaders that the students would face either military supervision or dispersal. In fact, Mao did both: while PLA personnel imposed military-style control, contending Red Guard organizations were disbanded, and students and teachers were sent to rural areas to be reeducated through physical labor. Many Red Guard leaders were investigated and punished, and rank-and-file members were subjected to compulsory political education. At Tsinghua University, according to Andreas, “the first tasks assigned to the propaganda team were to re-establish order, suppress the contending factional organizations . . . and create new leadership bodies. The team established its authority by harshly suppressing all potential opposition, creating a tone of terror.”²⁶

On August 5, 1968, Mao directed Wang Dongxing, the chief of his bodyguard unit, to present the worker teams that entered Tsinghua with a special gift—a basket of Pakistani mangoes—as a token of his endorsement of their accomplishment.²⁷ Two years after launching the Cultural Revolution, Red Guard groups were no longer needed, and Mao had now signed their death warrant. The date was highly significant, if not ironic: it was exactly two years earlier that Mao had issued his electrifying declaration “Bombard the Headquarters,” which had called the Red Guard movement into being. In the next several months, a nationwide propaganda campaign was initiated in which the mango was transformed from an exotic fruit little known in China to a near-sacred symbol. Embodying the political authority of worker and PLA teams, mangoes (either the real fruit

or wax replicas) were dispatched to various provinces and cities and were worshipped by tens of thousands in elaborately staged parades and ceremonies. Partaking of the personal charismatic power of Mao, the mango was incorporated into the nationwide process of demobilizing an increasingly unruly mass movement and restoring political order. While he was sending mangoes to the worker teams, Mao declared that “the working class must be in charge of everything,”²⁸ thereby stating that the usefulness of the Red Guards had passed. The workers’ teams would enter universities and other units to “supervise and reform the superstructure”—to be in charge of political rebuilding and ideological recentralization.²⁹ Although the name “Red Guard” was to live on for another decade, mainly as the institutional successor to the Communist Youth League in China’s middle schools, its days as an extraparty mass political force ended after the summer of 1968.

Beginning in early 1967, as I discussed in Chapter 5, the process of rebuilding party and state structures accelerated in late 1967 and early 1968. The task of forming unified, relatively stable new organs of power was by no means easy. The tortuous process involved much violence. In his methodical study based on over 1,500 Chinese county gazetteers, Yang Su demonstrated that the peaks of large-scale violence in fact closely followed the establishment of local revolutionary committees, while death counts from earlier conflicts (including factional battles) were “relatively small.”³⁰ A quick look at the formation of provincial revolutionary committees gives us some sense of the challenges involved. Between January and March 1967, only five provincial committees were set up, followed by the Beijing Municipal Revolutionary Committee in April. In May, June, and July, no new ones were set up, and there were only three from August to the end of the year. The chronology is as follows:³¹

Heilongjiang, January 31, 1967

Shandong, February 3, 1967

Guizhou, February 14, 1967

Shanghai, February 24, 1967 (Shanghai Commune, February 5)

Shanxi, March 8, 1967

Beijing, April 20, 1967

Qinghai, August 12, 1967

Inner Mongolia, November 1, 1967

Tianjin, December 6, 1967

Jiangxi, January 5, 1968

Gansu, January 24, 1968

Henan, January 27, 1968

Hebei, February 3, 1968
 Hubei, February 5, 1968
 Guangdong, February 21, 1968
 Jilin, March 6, 1968
 Jiangsu March 23, 1968
 Zhejiang, March 24, 1968
 Hunan, April 8, 1968
 Ningxia, April 10, 1968
 Anhui, April 18, 1968
 Shaanxi, May 1, 1968
 Liaoning, May 10, 1968
 Sichuan, May 31, 1968
 Yunnan, August 13, 1968
 Fujian, August 14, 1968
 Guangxi, August 26, 1968
 Tibet, September 5, 1968
 Xinjiang, September 5, 1968

The process was completed in September 1968 when Beijing ratified the revolutionary committees in Tibet and Xinjiang, and the occasion was hailed as “the all-round victory of the Cultural Revolution.”³² In most provinces, military officers headed the new organs of power. Of the twenty-nine provincial revolutionary committees, six were chaired by generals, six by lieutenant generals, and nine by major generals. The remaining ones, Shanghai included, were chaired by civilian officials who served concurrently as PLA political commissars. The army’s involvement in the sub-provincial governments was equally pronounced. In some provinces, PLA officers chaired over 80 percent of all revolutionary committees at the county level or above.³³ Even when representatives of mass groups were granted seats in the new organs of power, they often occupied relatively minor roles or were given no regular administrative responsibilities.

Accounts of the Cultural Revolution usually end with the demobilization in 1968, when in fact it was just entering what may have been its most violent phase. Between 1968 and 1972, several campaigns—“Cleansing the Class Ranks,” “One Strike, Three-Antis” (*yida sanfan*), and the campaign to purge the “May 16 elements”—were unleashed to hunt for all sorts of hidden enemies. Carried out by the newly formed revolutionary committees, these campaigns secured the new political order by purging the class enemies who purportedly had instigated factional strife. Numerous special-case (*zhuan’an*) investigators looked into the personal history of those who came under suspicion, delving into dossiers and interrogat-

ing former coworkers or distant relatives.³⁴ In late 1968, the Beijing Municipal Revolutionary Committee reported that in addition to 142,559 already attacked during previous political campaigns (including 109,007 “five categories,” 19,614 “former enemy military and police personnel,” 2,409 “active elements in reactionary party and youth organizations,” and 11,529 “leading or active elements in reactionary secret or religious societies”), 80,100 new class enemies had been “recently exposed” in the Cultural Revolution, including 3,297 “renegades,” 4,761 “special agents,” 9,993 “active counterrevolutionaries,” 3,207 “unrepentant capitalist roaders,” 203 “bourgeois academic authorities,” 2,319 “reactionary capitalists,” 27,565 “unreformed five categories,” 14,435 “newly exposed five categories,” and 14,320 “other types of bad elements.”³⁵ In late 1968, at the height of the class-cleansing campaign in Shanghai, nearly 1,000 major cases (*zhongda anjian*) were investigated, involving 170,000 individuals and resulting in over 5,400 deaths. By 1972, 190,000 had been investigated, and over 29,000 had been denounced as “active counterrevolutionaries.”³⁶ Directed by the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG) to “exhaustively check archives of the KMT and Japanese puppet regimes and thoroughly uncover counterrevolutionaries, traitors, and spies,” the new Revolutionary Committee of Hunan deployed 1,400 cadres to canvass as many as 100,000 volumes of pre-1949 archives in search of incriminating information, and 710,000 “useful leads” were found.³⁷ In 1970, Hunan’s “One Strike, Three-Antis” campaign investigated and tried over 24,000 “counterrevolutionary cases,” a whopping twenty-two-fold increase over 1965.³⁸ These witch-hunting purges, wrote Kraus, “were the most violent aspects of the Cultural Revolution, but they were much less visible than the flamboyant rallies in the heyday of the Red Guards.”³⁹ To end factional strife and consolidate the newly established authorities, the national leadership also condoned or supported the claims of counterrevolutionary conspiracy manufactured by local leaders to malign opposing factions. Often involving the PLA or local militia forces, the violent campaigns to ferret out sham conspirators took on extraordinary ferocity and produced tens of thousands of deaths, including many killed because of their stigmatized class status.⁴⁰

With freewheeling mass politics coming to an end, a new national campaign was launched to reassert ideological control. Initiated in July 1968, the campaign attempted to combat forms of unauthorized political communication and heretical interpretations, such as “rumors,” “gossip,” “back-alley stories,” “lies and slanders,” “fabrication of official documents,” and “misinterpretation of leaders’ words,” which purportedly “caused ideological confusions and interfered with Chairman Mao’s great strategic

plan.”⁴¹ Dissemination of internal documents and leaders’ speeches, a common form of political communication in the Cultural Revolution, was declared strictly forbidden as the Leninist principle of organizational discipline was reasserted. A *People’s Daily* editorial published in August 1968, unmistakably titled “Unity of Wills, Unity of Steps, and Unity of Actions,” called for “boundlessly and eternally worshipping [*wuxian chongbai, yongyuan chongbai*] the proletarian headquarters” and reiterated the themes of centralization, obedience, and discipline in extravagant language: “Truth is in the hands of the proletarian headquarters, which it is terribly wrong not to worship. . . . Every revolutionary fighter must resolutely obey and thoroughly carry out every order of Chairman Mao and the proletarian headquarters. Whether they fully understand or not, they must carry out the orders unconditionally. In the absence of full understanding, they must first carry out the order while striving to deepen their understanding.”⁴²

As part of the attempt to retroactively rationalize the events of the previous two years, the CCP convened a special congress in October 1968. The public denunciation of Liu Shaoqi marked a moment of ideologically stitching together the fragments of the Chinese social and political fabric torn apart by the turmoil. The relentless attacks on Liu narrowed the polemical objectives of the Cultural Revolution; in the words of Lowell Dittmer, “no longer would wholesale assaults on the power structure be permitted; criticism would henceforth be concentrated against Liu Shao-ch’i and a ‘small handful’ of authoritatively designated targets.”⁴³ Significantly, the charge against Liu was not only that he had followed a “capitalist road,” but also that he was a “renegade, traitor, and scab hidden in the party and a lackey of imperialism and the KMT reactionaries.” According to the special investigation report ratified by the plenum, Liu was a secret agent who had infiltrated the CCP at the beginning of his political career in the early 1920s, and his wife, Wang Guangmei, who married Liu in the 1940s as a young Communist student, was a special agent of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.⁴⁴ The ideological logic underlying these charges was obviously that the Liuist deviation was not an organic growth in the party but rather an intrusion by enemy agents who had infiltrated the revolutionary ranks. The denigration of China’s “number-one capitalist roaders” as the hidden enemy to be purged marked a drastic simplification and thinning out of the complex field of political signification of the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution movement came to an anticlimactic close at the Ninth Congress of the CCP in April 1969 when the new party constitution reasserted the conception of discipline characteristic of the CCP before the Cultural Revolution: “The whole party must obey unitary disci-

pline: individuals obey the organization, the minority obeys the majority, subordinates obey their superiors, and the whole party obeys the Central Committee.”⁴⁵ Liu Shaoqi—once charged with suppressing the mass movement—was now accused of advocating anarchist views and weakening the party’s centralized leadership.⁴⁶ The Congress also marked the end of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, the special entity set up by Mao that had enjoyed extraordinary power and had largely superseded the party’s regular decision-making bodies.⁴⁷ Through appointment of key CCRG members to the Politburo, the body was absorbed into the party’s regular organizations. Significantly, the Ninth Party Congress also marked the zenith of the PLA’s influence in Chinese politics. The army’s predominance in the political life of the country was reflected in the composition of the new CCP Central Committee: of the 279 full and alternate members, 49 percent were military men, while the remainder were divided between veteran officials who had been reinstated to office and selected mass representatives. The preponderance of PLA officers led some scholars to postulate the “militarization of the Chinese leadership.”⁴⁸ Beginning in late 1968, hundreds of thousands of urban students were sent to the countryside in a massive rustication program, and many were sent to colonize frontier regions under semimilitary supervision. The rustication program, which continued throughout the remainder of the Mao era, was cloaked in lofty revolutionary rhetoric, such as “narrowing the gap between town and countryside” and “cultivating proletarian revolutionary successors.” But in reality it served urgent political and economic purposes by relieving the urban centers of immense economic pressure and in the meantime removing a disruptive political force that was skidding out of control.⁴⁹

Continuing Crises

The great paroxysm of 1966–1968 left a regime in deep disarray and tens of millions traumatized, exhausted, or disillusioned. The CCP’s Ninth Party Congress in 1969 proclaimed the Cultural Revolution’s glorious triumph. The mirage of unity and victory, however, was soon shattered by new political cleavages. A major crisis erupted in September 1971 when Marshal Lin Biao, Mao’s heir apparent, died in a plane crash in Mongolia following what appeared to be an abortive assassination plot against Mao.⁵⁰ The enigmatic Lin Biao affair was the culmination of Byzantine succession struggles among China’s top leaders. Although the exact circumstances of the affair remain to be fully known, it is beyond doubt that it had an acute impact on Chinese politics and society during Mao’s last years. After the

widespread purge of top PLA officers allegedly supportive of Lin, the role of the army in national political life declined. Rebuilding of party and government apparatuses accelerated, and the drive to rehabilitate cadres attacked during the Cultural Revolution picked up new momentum as Lin was conveniently condemned as the backstage black hand behind the excesses committed during the turmoil. More important, the affair also had an enormous impact on popular morale. The incident was originally kept secret; but as knowledge of it gradually spread, it had an overwhelmingly damaging effect on the general populace's views of the Cultural Revolution, Mao, and CCP politics. Many ordinary Chinese were greatly shocked. How could "the most revered vice commander in chief" attempt to assassinate the Great Leader? Most damagingly, how could the apparently omnipotent and omniscient Mao have failed to detect the murderous enemy right next to him? The crisis became, as Mao's official biographers acknowledged, "a momentous turning point" that "effectively proclaimed the theoretical and practical failure of the 'Cultural Revolution.'"⁵¹ Disillusion, confusion, and cynicism abounded. Rae Yang, a Beijing student rusticated to Yunnan, wrote in her memoir about the impact on her: "This incident shocked me and made me question the nature of the Cultural Revolution. Was it really an unprecedented revolution in human history led by a group of men (and a few women) with vision and exemplary moral integrity, as I had believed? Or was it a power struggle that started at the top and later permeated the whole country?"⁵² Another rusticated student recorded a very similar experience: "I was totally shocked. The incident further deepened my confusion. Chairman Mao's handpicked successor betrayed him and even wanted to kill him! My trust in many things suddenly turned shaky. It was like you had been walking firmly toward a goal and felt good about it. Then one day you found out that the goal was only an illusion."⁵³

We have yet to understand more fully what was happening in Chinese society during the late Mao years of the early and mid-1970s, a critical transitional period that laid the ground for impending sea changes in Chinese politics and society. China's ruling stratum was riddled with Byzantine power struggles, and there were numerous indications of deterioration in the party's chain of command. The decline of the party's capacity for control was accompanied by slackening discipline, increasing numbers of crimes, illegal exchange of goods and services, various forms of petty corruption, widespread consumer scarcity, and more. Slowdowns, absenteeism, and thefts of supplies were prevalent in factories.⁵⁴ In some parts of the country, remnants of mass factionalism persisted—openly and even violently—long after the formation of revolutionary committees and the

disbandment of mass organizations and were aggravated by prevalent conflicts in a newly restored but disorganized bureaucracy.⁵⁵ The increasingly ritualized and dogmatic Maoist rhetoric had largely lost its power to inspire political discourse. Mao, according to his official biographers, was well aware that “after the Lin Biao incident many people had turned profoundly skeptical about the Cultural Revolution” and consequently became “extremely concerned.”⁵⁶ The weakening of the party’s ideological orthodoxy and Leninist discipline, severe disruption of its bureaucratic organizations during the Cultural Revolution, growing popular apathy about state-initiated campaigns, and worsening mass discontents were all indicative of the weakening of the party’s general social base.

The Chinese economy faced many problems at the end of the Mao era, although it was hardly on the brink of collapse, as many post-Mao accounts have portrayed.⁵⁷ The pervasive economic difficulties caused by both political instability and overly centralized systems had a deep impact on the everyday life of ordinary Chinese, particularly in the neglected area of consumption—a result of China’s developmentalist model, which prioritized growth of industrial and military capacity. Between 1952 and 1978, China’s gross economic capital grew at an average rate of 10.4 percent annually, and it was thirteen times as large in 1978 as in 1952; but household consumption grew at only a 4.3 percent rate and was triple the 1952 level by 1978. Allowing for population growth, per capital consumption grew only 2.3 percent annually.⁵⁸ Real wages actually declined. The chronic shortage of consumer goods and overcrowding in urban housing almost reached crisis proportions.⁵⁹ The ubiquitous rationing system, first introduced in the 1950s, was expanded to cover more than 80 percent of staple foods and everyday consumer goods, including such items as grain, meat, eggs, tofu, milk, cooking oil, sugar, cigarettes, toilet paper, soap, cotton cloth, bicycles, wristwatches, clocks, and radios.⁶⁰

There are indications that general social disarray continued throughout Mao’s last years. In Meisner’s words, “A wave of strikes, factory slowdowns, and absenteeism—fueled by a combination of economic and political grievances—swept through most major industrial centers. . . . An upsurge in common crime, including bank robberies and the looting of state granaries, added to the social turbulence.”⁶¹ After writing much about the developing urban crisis, the French historian Marie Bergère asked pointedly: “Can we conclude there was a depoliticisation of China’s urban society? Or must we consider this anarchy, these illegal and criminal activities as expressions of political opposition? In a society where institutions do not provide regular channels for the expression of dissent, common law offenders may well be primitive political rebels. When revolutionary

enthusiasm, mass adhesion and personal commitment are presented as the ultimate legitimation of a regime, any attack against social and economic order is also a political crime.” “The general impression,” Bergère concluded, “is that in the wake of the Cultural Revolution a mood of skepticism and cynicism had settled down upon Chinese cities. At a time when political and security controls were hampered by rivalries and confusion going on at the top, urban society also had lost its internal consensus upon revolutionary goals and its trust in socialist construction.”⁶² Evidently, the restoration of Deng Xiaoping to political power, the “number-two capitalist roader in the Party,” was Mao’s attempt to salvage the worsening political and economic situations. After spending seven years in ignominy, Deng was rehabilitated at the Tenth Party Congress in 1973 on the recommendation of Zhou Enlai and with the approval of Mao.⁶³

The threats to the regime, however, did not come merely from the primitive rebels and their inarticulate acts.⁶⁴ What was becoming more ominous, from the state’s view, was the increasingly politicized nature of the expressions of discontent, which were otherwise largely inchoate, as well as the possibility that scattered outbursts of popular restiveness might coalesce and develop into more coherent and articulate movements. With the close of the Cultural Revolution’s mass politics, the extraparty space in which independent mass organizations had once flourished largely disappeared. However, although the Cultural Revolution brought no profound changes in China’s political system, this brief but intense period of “great democracy,” when unprecedented opportunities for political organization became available, did inspire important changes in popular political consciousness and expression. Above all, tens of thousands of young people gained firsthand experience in the political arena. They talked, read, and listened in new ways; they debated; and they formed their own organizations. The young generation mobilized into a grassroots movement found itself presented with unexpected opportunities of action and expression, and the sense of liberation was exhilarating. As Wang Xizhe, a former rebel in Guangzhou who later turned into a political dissident, wrote shortly after the close of the Mao era, a key result of the Cultural Revolution was that the common people “will never again feel inferior in front of officials. . . . They even dared to study all kinds of problems in Chinese society from the angle of questioning the system itself.”⁶⁵

Some of the critical currents and ideas that first emerged in the Cultural Revolution survived the demobilization of 1968–1970. Although such ideas made only a brief appearance, as Liu Guokai—another former rebel in Guangzhou—wrote in an underground manuscript in the early 1970s, they “struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many people.”⁶⁶ After the

national campaign to transfer the urban students to the countryside was launched in 1968, many took their unsatisfied idealistic and creative energy to remote parts of the country. Lively political, intellectual, and literary exchanges continued unabated among the young people in various underground circles, through essays, poems, songs, and stories.⁶⁷ Fragmented and dispersed, these unofficial networks and spaces persisted in many parts of the country, drawing rusticated youth, young workers, and students. As Paul Clark argues in his recent book, the vibrant youth culture that appeared in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution was by no means accidental: "It emerges from the social upheaval, disruptions, and experimentation of those ten years. Chairman Mao's call for the young to take the initiative in what passed for politics set many young people on a road to self-discovery and creativity that the elderly leader could not have foreseen."⁶⁸ Although many withdrew from political activism, others were disillusioned not with politics per se but with the forms in which it found expression in the party-imposed discourse. Despite the severe political environment, subversive ideas continued to be pursued.

In the Li Yizhe case in Guangzhou, young activists continued to explore those critical themes that had first emerged during the Cultural Revolution upheaval. Li Yizhe was the pseudonym of a small group composed of a library clerk, a fish-oil factory worker, and a teacher, all of whom had been active in the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁹ The group produced a number of essays; its most publicized statement, "On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System," was a long essay probing the question of how a more open and democratic socialist society could be possible. The group targeted the alleged "Lin Biao system" to camouflage a critique of what it viewed as the suppression of the Cultural Revolution mass movement. Taking a hard look at the official campaign to denounce Lin Biao, Mao's disgraced heir, it asked the poignant question: How could Lin Biao be denounced without the very system that made him possible being critically scrutinized? The Li Yizhe authors did not attack the Cultural Revolution, which they believed was of great political significance. The Cultural Revolution, they proclaimed, "is in reality the most comprehensive revolutionary mass people's democracy . . . the main task of which is to forge the revolutionary democratic spirit of the people for self-liberation, rather than to expose and destroy Liu Shaoqi's bourgeois headquarters."⁷⁰ The movement, the authors continued, "actually had as its fundamental content making rebellion. . . . But it could be said that suppression and resistance against suppression ran through the entire process of the Cultural Revolution."⁷¹

The Li Yizhe critics combined their analysis of the Cultural Revolution with a broader critique of China's state socialist polity in a way reminiscent

of the April 3 and Shengwulian critics discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. They argued that the problem lay in the rise of a new bourgeois class that suppressed the masses who challenged its authority: “The essence of the appropriation of possessions by the ‘new bourgeois class’ is to ‘turn public into private.’ . . . The most common is that certain leaders have expanded the scope of the special care that has been provided to them by the party and the people. They turn this into political and economic privileges, which are extended without limitation to their family, friends, and relatives. . . . More important, in order to protect the privileges . . . they must suppress the masses who rise to oppose their privileges and must illegally deprive [them] of their political rights and economic interests.”⁷² The Li Yizhe critics argued that the “proletarian dictatorship”—a much-vaunted slogan—had become a dictatorship exercised by “a clique of new nobility . . . whose interests come into opposition with the people’s.”⁷³ There was a crying need, they argued, to establish due process of law to protect and facilitate citizens’ democratic participation in the political arena. They saw the Cultural Revolution as having offered possibilities for addressing such vital issues: “Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association, which are all incorporated in the Constitution, and . . . have been truly practiced.” But the Cultural Revolution failed to institutionalize these practices, and it “has not completed its task to grasp tightly the weapons of the broad people’s democratic dictatorship.”⁷⁴ For them, an open, pluralistic democracy would be essential to keep the socialist project on track, as well as to defend and consolidate the rights hard won through mass political action.⁷⁵

Chen Erjin’s pamphlet “On the Proletarian Democratic Revolution” was arguably the most articulate statement in this critical tradition. Completed in secrecy before Mao’s death, the manuscript did not become public until it appeared in an unofficial journal in 1979. A schoolteacher and former rebel from Yunnan, Chen developed a novel analysis of the Cultural Revolution, echoing the Shengwulian critics in 1968. He argued that the Cultural Revolution was the result of growing social conflicts between China’s new ruling class and the masses, but it was fatally limited because it “failed to confront the primary, most fundamental, and most deadly disorder of the superstructure, namely, coercive monopoly of power by the minority. Or rather, it confronted the symptoms and not the root of this disorder, being directed merely at the ‘capitalist roaders’ themselves, rather than at the real, fundamental causes underlying their emergence. . . . The ‘revolution in the arts,’ the ‘revolution in health-care,’ the ‘revolution in education,’ the ‘reform of the state organs,’ the ‘Shanghai January Storm,’ and the ‘restriction of bourgeois right’ were all carried out entirely under

the dominance of coercive monopoly of power by the minority.”⁷⁶ Chen was concerned with radicalizing the antibureaucratic thrust in Maoism, which Mao eventually came to regard as posing too great a threat to the party-state. In China, Chen argued, public ownership had been usurped by a “bureaucratic-monopoly privileged class” and had turned into a collective form of private or corporate ownership, and the central feature of Chinese socialism lay in the fusion (*yitihua*) of political and economic power. This process, he argued, would entail a primitive accumulation of capital carried out by the nascent new ruling class.⁷⁷

For Chen, in order to prevent the consolidation of an ossified bureaucratic order, a decisive political intervention—a “proletarian democratic revolution”—would be critical. Instead of evading the basic contradiction that lay at the core of reformist solutions, this would have to be a political revolution that aimed at the seizure of power from the ruling minority by the entire working people. The Cultural Revolution failed as a movement of “petty-bourgeois left-wing reformism,” and the reasons for its failure were twofold: “First, the proletariat itself was not yet sufficiently mature. . . . Second, Mao Zedong himself, who monopolized the power of leadership in this revolution, could only, because of his class position and limitations of his time, propagate . . . a line proceeding from the defense of his own ruling positions and aimed at purging the persons and line of his comrades-in-arms. The reason that the movement, once started, developed so rapidly and fiercely was, precisely, that it meshed with the anti-bureaucratic aspirations of the people.”⁷⁸ Chen’s observation regarding the Cultural Revolution’s reformism and its ultimate fate was remarkably blunt: “They [Maoist leaders] fail to understand that the ‘restriction of bourgeois right,’ when carried out under the overall control of the bureaucratic class, can amount to nothing more than an empty phrase. They are placed in an extremely dangerous position, being not only divorced from the mass of the people, but at the same time hated by the bureaucratic class as a whole. At some decisive juncture, the bureaucratic class will assuredly drown them in their own blood.”⁷⁹ This was remarkably prophetic, as the Cultural Revolution, whatever its partial achievements, was to be cast very soon into the dustbin of history by a rebuilt party.

The writings of critics such as Chen Erjin and Li Yizhe may be viewed as an unstable synthesis of certain key aspects of the original critical thrust of the Cultural Revolution with emergent, novel elements in the political thinking of many young grassroots activists. Taken together, their writings were to become the basic texts of a growing democratic dissent that provided the foundation for envisioning new political possibilities. It is noteworthy that the theoretical stance of these grassroots critics contrasted sharply

with the inconclusive and often arcane contemporary discussions conducted within the official discourse, initiated by what one scholar has aptly termed China's "established left."⁸⁰ Zhang Chunqiao, one of Mao's closest associates and a member of the Gang of Four, discussed the same politically explosive issue of social inequality in his well-known article "On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship over the Bourgeoisie," published in 1975 as a defense of the radical policies associated with the Cultural Revolution.⁸¹ Zhang began from the same problems of privilege and inequality but arrived at drastically different political diagnoses and solutions. For critics such as Li Yizhe and Chen Erjin, China's problem was the entrenchment of a socialist ruling elite in a monopoly of political and economic power; for Zhang, social inequality derived from the remnants of the capitalist past, seen as capable of regenerating itself within the new socialist society. Unlike the grassroots activists who advocated extending mass democracy to protect the egalitarian achievements of the Cultural Revolution, Zhang argued instead that it would be necessary to implement a wide range of state policies favoring egalitarian forms of distribution, as well as to instill a proletarian consciousness among the party workers. The need to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat—that is, to install a centralized and disciplinarian state power—was justified by the need to reduce socioeconomic inequalities. This stress on the state, leaders, discipline, and ideological unity not only constituted what Meisner called "a grotesquely perverted version of Marxism"⁸² but also was indicative of the inherent limits of late Maoist ideology.

By the mid-1970s, signs of deep social dissatisfaction had become unmistakable. In a major case of social restiveness, the city of Guangzhou was seething with urban discontent, which culminated in October 1974. A massive crowd of more than 100,000, mainly young workers and rusticated youth, climbed the scenic White Cloud Mountain in the vicinity of Guangzhou, ostensibly to honor their ancestors in the tradition of the lunar Double-Ninth Festival. But their action was in reality a symbolic expression of discontent. An eyewitness's retelling of his experience is worth quoting:

We never expected to wind up in the middle of over 100,000 people swarming up the mountain, like ants on a rice cake. . . . The bulk of the crowd turned out to be young factory workers from Canton. They had taken the day off from work without permission.

[The workers] had come because they were frustrated with their young lives. . . . [You asked] why they had come, and they replied: "We're here because we're fed up with what's going on in Canton. Young workers are unhappy. We've been waiting for the fruits of the Cultural Revolution to ripen,

but all we've gathered is a sour harvest. We're fed up with campaigns and with the privileges of the cadres." One youth said: "maybe they'll listen to the voices of the young factory workers. Aren't we supposed to be the vanguard of the revolution? If we are unhappy, then maybe the leaders should find out what's wrong and change the system." . . . A group of factory workers were shouting: "White Cloud Mountain is a symbol of revolution in Canton. We liberated it from the Japanese invaders and made it a symbol of revolution. It was the masses who did this and we have a right to climb it whenever we wish, to show this is ours, even by our revolutionary blood. Down with all the fancy villas and fishponds for the elite that have grown up on this revolutionary monument! Down with the authorities who suppress criticism and don't listen to people like Li Yizhe!"⁸³

Pervasive popular discontent was expressed in another dramatic show of force in the national capital in early April 1976, when Chinese traditionally pay their respects to the deceased. In what became one of the largest mass protests in the history of the PRC, over a million people gathered in the hallowed Tiananmen Square, where a decade earlier Mao had inspected millions of worshipping Red Guards, reciting poems, giving speeches, reading and debating wall posters, and clashing with the police.⁸⁴ Hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens, including many former Red Guards, joined the protests. Far more ominous was the sense of defiance directed at Mao, whom a small number of posters and speeches implicitly targeted. These poems and writings were circulated among a growing network of young activists who were creating what was soon to emerge as the Democracy Wall Movement over two years later. The protest was swiftly suppressed with Mao's personal approval. A *People's Daily* statement portrayed the popular disturbances as follows: "A handful of class enemies . . . engineered a premeditated, planned, and organized counterrevolutionary political incident at Tiananmen Square in the capital. They blatantly made reactionary speeches, posted reactionary poems and slogans, distributed reactionary leaflets, and agitated for setting up counterrevolutionary organizations."⁸⁵ Denounced as counterrevolutionary and reactionary by Maoist leaders, the event was remembered in the popular consciousness as the April 5 Movement—a powerful symbol of opposition that would find continuing political expression in contemporary China.

The winter of 1978 witnessed the dramatic emergence in a number of Chinese cities of another wave of grassroots movements dedicated to promoting the post-Mao leadership's professed goal of renewing Chinese socialism. It is worth mentioning that many of the critical currents that first emerged in the Cultural Revolution or in Mao's last years blossomed during the critical but fluid transitional period of the early post-Mao years.

Contrasting sharply with the tumultuous violence of the late 1960s and with the emerging order in the 1980s centering on economic modernization and technocratic elitism, the late 1970s were a time when novel ideological and political possibilities flourished in what was in effect a popular movement of social criticism, literary and artistic renaissance, resurgent social protests, and a brief period of remarkable collective improvisation and cultural creativity. A popular political imaginary that was concurrently democratic and socialist was reconfigured from earlier ruptural moments, posing a profound challenge to a party-state that was already in prolonged agony. Widely known as the Democracy Wall Movement, these diffuse but vibrant movements reflected the prevalent sense of alienation and discontent in Chinese society.

The Democracy Wall Movement first erupted in November 1978. In that year, the intraleadership conflicts between Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng, who took on Mao's mantle in late 1976, resulted in a number of major policy changes, including the abrupt reversal of the official verdict on the Tiananmen Incident over two years earlier. This turnabout opened a Pandora's box of more fundamental issues, and a brief window of slackening political control emerged. By the fall of 1978, the official media began to make frequent liberalizing gestures toward rule of law, limited terms of office, open elections, freedom of thought, and an effective judiciary to rein in officials who abused power.⁸⁶ It was within this context that what had been seething underground grievances and discontent erupted aboveground in late 1978 and early 1979, when many ordinary Chinese began to put their thoughts on paper, and paper onto walls. Thousands of posters appeared on a drab, two-hundred-meter stretch of wall on Xidan Avenue in central Beijing, just to the west of Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City, part of which was now the CCP's headquarters. This was often dubbed the "Xidan Democracy Wall."⁸⁷

The most common mode of expression in the short-lived Democracy Wall Movement was wall posters or *dazibao*, an integral part of Chinese political life in the late Mao era. There were small-character posters, written with pen on pages torn from notebooks, and big-character posters in the Cultural Revolution fashion, which were large sheets of paper on which the characters were written with a traditional Chinese brush. Composed of either political essays or poems, these posters were pasted not only on the Xidan wall but also along the city's main streets and even on the red signboards bearing Mao's quotations that stood at major intersections.

Most of the activists were in their twenties or early thirties. Using familiar techniques, such as wall posters, pamphlets, and open debate, grassroots activists—workers, former rebels, and students—attempted to exer-

cise what had been understood during the Cultural Revolution as the rights of popular political participation or “great democracy,” but now without the straitjacket of Maoist ideological orthodoxy. For example, one of the first posters that appeared criticized Mao by name, an extraordinary act that would be punishable by death, arguing that “Chairman Mao Zedong’s mistaken judgment on class struggle” had resulted in “an all-out attack on the cause of revolution”—namely, the bloody suppression of the Tiananmen protest in 1976, which “had shaken the whole world like an earthquake and showed that the Chinese people wanted liberation, progress, and revolution.” Remarkably, the author even identified himself as a motor mechanic who held work identification number 0538 and was employed at a repair shop at 57 Wangfujing Boulevard, Beijing.⁸⁸ Another poster that appeared in December 1978 boldly questioned Mao’s officially sanctioned image: “Mao did not create New China, it was the Chinese Revolution that created Mao.”⁸⁹ At an open forum in the center of Tiananmen Square, speakers also criticized Mao’s economic policies and called on China’s new leaders to adopt Yugoslavia’s model of worker self-management; others urged party leaders to study the lessons of Western liberal democracy, including its system of constitutional checks and balances. One speaker questioned Mao’s decision in 1949 to “lean to one side” in adopting the Soviet economic and political model. As one poster put it: “China’s system of government is modeled on the Russian system [which] produces bureaucracy and a privileged stratum. . . . We need a state where all delegates are elected and responsible to the people.”⁹⁰

To describe all these acts and views as part of a movement may impose a greater degree of unity than is warranted. From an organizational point of view, there was no single movement. Rather, there were simply many individuals and small groups formed around various illicitly published and circulated journals, posters, pamphlets, and handbills. Similarly, there existed a wide range of political issues and viewpoints. Although criticisms of Mao and the Cultural Revolution were common, and demands for human rights were the most daring voice, they were by no means the whole story. Attitudes toward Mao varied from the blunt criticism voiced by the aforementioned 0538 to earnest praises of Mao as the leader of revolutionary struggle against a degenerated party. The word “democracy” came up over and over again, but the concept was variously associated with socialism, communism, liberal democracy, capitalism, or even Christianity. Far from being unified by any shared orientation or program, the participants piled up meanings on a few overdetermined terms, such as democracy, socialism, revolution, and freedom, and the very messiness of these ideas widened their appeal. The movement, which lacked ideological and

organizational unity, existed only abstractly as an imagined field of collective political action and solidarity that gave meaning to apparently disconnected acts and events.

Increasing rapidly both in number and political militancy, the wall posters expressed the grievances and demands of ever-wider sectors of China's urban population. Democracy walls and democracy forums mushroomed in a dozen provincial capitals, including Shanghai, Wuhan, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, among others.⁹¹ Activists in Beijing also formed propaganda teams to take their message to workers and students in other major cities.⁹² Political discussions soon turned into meetings and rallies. Soon, hundreds of journals, usually run by like-minded comrades and printed or crudely mimeographed on paper, which was always difficult to obtain, began to appear alongside the wall posters. The names of these journals reflected the wide range of issues and interests they represented: *Exploration*, *Enlightenment*, *April 5 Forum*, *Harvest*, *Democracy and Law*, *Science*, *People's Forum*, *Masses' Reference News*, *China's Human Rights*, *Fertile Land*, *Today*, *Beijing Spring*, *Voice of the People*, and so on.⁹³ The print run of most of these illicit publications did not exceed a few hundred. In Beijing, there was even a black market for the circulation of these materials. Throughout late 1978 and early 1979, usually on Sunday afternoons, crowds gathered at the Democracy Wall to buy or exchange such materials. These publications—known as “people's journals” or *minkan*—formed the organizational and ideological core of the movement, circulating a broad mixture of commentaries on democracy, socialism, Marxism, morality, legality, and civil rights, as well as on literary and artistic issues. Many also touched on pressing concerns of the day, such as socioeconomic inequalities, cadre privileges, wage reform, consumer and housing shortages, or even international affairs and conflicts. After China launched what the government called a self-defensive counterattack on Vietnam in February 1979, for example, a poster went up on the Xidan Democracy Wall deriding “a country as big as China” for “attacking a little childlike Vietnam,” in defiance of a government decree prohibiting wall posters on the subject of the border war. “The People's Liberation Army should not be sent on foreign adventures but should stick to fighting inside Chinese territory when it is attacked by invaders.” In attacking Vietnam, claimed the author, “China has forfeited its international reputation and will find itself isolated in the world community.”⁹⁴ Even issues pertaining to sexual freedom were discussed. A poster that appeared in late 1978 called for relaxation of premarital sex, arguing that harsh sexual morality and repression had increased the incidents of sex-related crimes and worked against the development of socialism.⁹⁵

In calling for the rule of law and protection of civil rights, the Democracy Wall activists drew on a heterogeneous assortment of resources, ranging from classical Marxist and socialist traditions to Enlightenment philosophers, experiments in Yugoslavia, and Western liberal democracy. Opinions were diverse and often sharply divided. For example, a wall poster put up in early December 1978 pleaded President Jimmy Carter to “pay attention to the state of human rights in China” and help “accelerate China’s movement toward a positive and effective human rights policy.” The poster, however, provoked an instant controversy. A reply that appeared the next day reproached it for asking “the democratic emperor [Carter]” to bestow on the Chinese people “a bit of democracy and human rights.” “You probably haven’t heard about the scandal concerning the collective suicide of 900 believers of the American People’s Temple,” the critic retorted; “here is a wonderful image of capitalist freedom and democracy.”⁹⁶ In early January 1979, a certain Gongmin (meaning “citizen”) that claimed to be “a group of Chinese workers, the younger generation of the Chinese proletariat,” issued an open letter again addressed to Carter, shortly before Deng Xiaoping’s historic visit to the United States, soliciting assistance on behalf of Chinese citizens arrested for political reasons. A poster that followed criticized the letter for espousing a “one-sided view” implying that “China never enjoyed democracy and only the United States has,” and that “socialism could never bring democracy, only capitalism could.” Although the author acknowledged that America perhaps “has seen some of civilization’s greatest achievements,” he or she was nevertheless convinced that socialism, when “imbued with the boundless vitality of democracy,” could save China.⁹⁷ In January 1979, a group that called itself the Chinese Human Rights League issued the “19-Point Declaration,” a comprehensive document that included a wide array of demands for civil rights, political participation, and socioeconomic equality:

- Guarantee of freedom of thought and speech; release of all political prisoners.
- Citizens’ right to freely elect both national and local leaders; establishment through direct vote of “citizens’ committees” or “citizens’ councils.”
- Full autonomy for the ethnic minorities.
- State control of means of production should gradually end in a transition to societal ownership. Citizens should have the right to exercise supervision over the state’s control and allocation of the people’s surplus labor.
- Freedom of information must be assured.

- Abolition of the *danwei* system; freedom to choose employment, freedom of movement and migration, freedom of dress, and freedom of love.
- The state should guarantee basic food rations and supply for the peasants.
- Rusticated youth should enjoy the right of urban employment and residence.
- Work-unit party committees and the secret police have no right to detain, arrest, or investigate citizens. The secret police system must be abolished.
- Cases of political victimization must be reversed and rectified.
- Abolition of personality cult and deification; removal of Mao's body from the Tiananmen Square mausoleum in favor of a memorial hall dedicated to the popular April 5 Movement in 1976.⁹⁸

As the voices in the streets grew stronger and more articulate, parallel social protests also arose that altered the political dynamic of the movement. Thousands of peasants from various parts of the country came to Beijing to complain about their dismal lives in the countryside, holding banners reading "In the name of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua, We want equality," "We want food," and "We want clothes."⁹⁹ Unable to have their case resolved by local officials, numerous ordinary citizens also poured into the capital to express their grievances to central state agencies. Former city residents who had been exiled to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution petitioned to return. With official channels overwhelmed, desperate petitioners took to the streets. Large numbers of rusticated youth also returned to the cities. The returnees quickly established organizations and networks and staged rallies demanding household registration status, as well as urban employment.¹⁰⁰ The "people's journals" or *minkan* rallied to their support, and this in turn helped forge a broader sense of political solidarity.

The Democracy Wall Movement initially benefited Deng Xiaoping's faction, which was still politically vulnerable in the intraparty struggle. For several months, Deng and his allies tolerated or even encouraged the burgeoning movement, and Deng remarked that he thought that the movement "was a fine thing" and "could go on forever."¹⁰¹ Deng's remarks at the height of the movement appeared to be perfectly sincere: "The masses should be encouraged to offer criticisms. . . . One thing a revolutionary party does need to worry about is its inability to hear the voice of the people. The thing to be feared most is silence."¹⁰² However, as Deng steadily consolidated his power, and as signs of wider social mobilization loomed, the CCP leader-

ship began to regard the voice of the streets as a serious threat to order and stability. Arrests began as early as March 1979. Later that month, the Democracy Wall at Xidan was closed down and transferred to a park where would-be protesters were required to register their names and addresses with the police. By early 1980, most unofficial journals had been closed down. In September 1980, in a move that received scant official publicity, the National People's Congress amended the Constitution of the PRC by expunging the famous Article 45, which granted to citizens the so-called "four great freedoms" (*si da*), namely, the freedom to "speak out freely, air their views fully, engage in great debates, and write big-character posters." Partial and often nominal as they were, during the Cultural Revolution these rights provided some degree of legitimacy to popular challenges to party authorities; but now they were blamed for causing anarchy.¹⁰³ In early 1981, the CCP Central Committee decreed an end to all popular or "illegal" organizations and publications around the country. Soon, most leading writers and activists were behind bars, and remaining activities had been driven underground and became dissident.¹⁰⁴

The Road to Brumaire: The Hegemonic Politics of Economic Reform

Only two years after Mao's death, China's modernization program was officially launched at the Third Party Plenum in November 1978. As the protests grew in both scope and intensity, the leaders of the CCP gathered in their headquarters, located near where large crowds of people were gathering. A historic turning point, the most significant decision of the plenum was to shift the emphasis to modernization and to initiate the economic reforms that would transform China's social landscape for decades to come. This timing, I argue, was by no means sheer coincidence. Indeed, it was really the Cultural Revolution and its manifold ramifications that made it possible—and imperative—for China's ruling stratum to resolve to change its mode of governance, as well as for various social strata to unite temporarily behind the banner of reform. In a crucial sense, post-Mao reform may be understood as a continuation—but under significantly transformed historical circumstances—of the process of political rebuilding and restructuring in the wake of the Cultural Revolution mass movement.

It is noteworthy that the program of modernization that became the ideological cornerstone of the post-Mao regime was first proclaimed before Mao's death, just as party rebuilding was in full force. At the Fourth National Congress in 1975, a stirring call was made for the modernization

of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology so that China could be transformed into a “powerful, modern socialist country.” Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping formulated specific measures to realize these goals. He proposed a whole program that included the restoration of managerial authority, greater material rewards for workers, and rapid development of science and technology. However, Deng’s political rivals, who were backed by Mao, quickly condemned his policy.¹⁰⁵ When Mao’s immediate successor, Hua Guofeng, turned his attention to China’s problems in the late 1970s, he seemed to believe that economic development was all that was needed to extricate the party-state from socioeconomic and political woes. At the Fifth National People’s Congress in 1978, Hua unveiled an ambitious Ten-Year Plan, proposing investment for industrial capital construction surpassing the entire investment since 1949. The plan called for the construction of 120 megaprojects, including 10 major iron and steel complexes, 9 nonferrous-metal complexes, 8 new large coal mines, 10 petrochemical plants, 6 new trunk railways, 10 to 20 large fertilizer plants, 5 new ports, 30 large power plants, and even 10 new oil fields.¹⁰⁶ The basic ethos of the Ten-Year Plan can be exemplified by the fabulously ambitious projection that “the output of major industrial products will approach, equal, or outstrip that of the most developed capitalist countries by the end of the twentieth century.”¹⁰⁷ Clearly, Beijing’s central planners were in the grip of what one historian of Soviet Russia, in her discussion of Stalinist Russia’s high-modernist obsession with the biggest and the newest, has aptly termed “gigantomania.”¹⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, the huge amount of capital required to finance the development of large-scale industries and massive import of technologies left little for investment in agriculture or consumer-goods industries.

Premised on excessive bias toward heavy industry, increased control over labor, and a high degree of centralized control, Hua’s eminently Stalinist model quickly broke down.¹⁰⁹ The consolidation of Deng Xiaoping’s power was partially due to the troubles that Hua’s modernization project had run into. Instead of adopting Hua’s Soviet-style methods, Deng’s program was characterized by increasing material incentives, limited market mechanisms, greater enterprise autonomy, and administrative decentralization, all in the name of encouraging mass initiative and socialist democracy.

As the movement grew in the streets of Beijing in late 1978, the party leaders were gathering in their nearby headquarters, charting the future history of China. In response to the country’s worsening socioeconomic situation, the central themes of the new policy orientation formulated at the party plenum were economic construction and modernization. Ominously warning about the existence of “a small handful of counterrevolu-

tionary elements and criminals who hate our socialist modernization,” the communiqué declared national “stability and unity” to be the prerequisite to economic modernization, a ritualized phrase that has been heard numerous times ever since. It also proclaimed that “the large-scale turbulent class struggles of a massive character have in the main come to an end,”¹¹⁰ a radical departure from late Maoism. Several months later, Deng Xiaoping announced officially that classes in Chinese society had been on the whole eliminated, thereby dismantling China’s discriminating class-status system while at the same time ruling out the existence of a “bourgeoisie within the party,” a politically explosive notion that constituted the hallmark of the Maoist doctrine of the Cultural Revolution.

As many have argued, there is little doubt that the economic reform initiated in 1978–1980 fundamentally reoriented China’s developmental path. The key question here, however, is how we comprehend the essentially political significance of an economic approach as such, as overdetermined in its specific historical context. What emerged from this period was more than merely a new national developmental strategy. Rather, it should be understood as the response of the Chinese leadership to continuously developing crises. The significantly changed social and political circumstances in the wake of the Cultural Revolution made it difficult for China’s ruling elite to resurrect the closed bureaucratic structures of authority characteristic of the pre-Cultural Revolution days. First enunciated in the mid-1970s, the program of modernization may be viewed as part of the effort by China’s ruling stratum to adapt to new situations and tasks and to continuously reorganize the base and form of its governance, and above all, as a political response to widespread popular discontent and pressure.

It is under such circumstances that the multifaceted significance of the post-Mao liberalizing reformist measures should be understood. Based on a constellation of policies innocuously labeled pragmatism—profit incentive, market imperatives, and decentralization—the reform paradigm advocated by the Deng regime partly deviated from the Stalinist solutions of intensified control and extraction and radiantly promised all things to all people. Peasants were promised more freedom to cultivate private plots and to trade in rural markets, and the family contract system implemented in the rural areas in the early 1980s practically decollectivized Chinese agriculture. Urban workers were promised higher wages and bonuses, along with better housing and expanded welfare benefits. Intellectuals, especially scientists and engineers, were promised income and social status appropriate to their professional skills. The liberalizing measures also made possible the explosive reappearance of petty private commerce in both rural and urban areas, spearheaded by millions of impoverished

peasants who attempted to break out of the highly regimented collective-farm system and by hundreds of thousands of underemployed or unemployed urban youth badly in need of eking out a living in the interstices of a strained command economy incapable of providing jobs. In the words of Xue Muqiao, one of Deng Xiaoping's top economic advisers, for self-employing private entrepreneurs and their workers, "the state will not be required to pay them wages."¹¹¹

In coping with continuing socioeconomic and political difficulties, this market-based approach might indeed have loosened the control of the Leninist party-state. But by preempting popular challenges to the existing power, it posed less of a threat to the position of the ruling elite. All these measures were, after all, conducted within the calculated political limits of maintaining the existing structure of power. The reform program hence constituted a negotiated political solution to the widening crises, through which popular demands were partially absorbed and neutralized while the existing structure of power was preserved and consolidated. In fact, the essentially political logic of the economic reform has been well understood by its advocates. In the candid words of Wu Jinglian, one of the key strategists of China's market reforms in the 1980s (hence his nickname, "Mr. Market Wu"), "The political will of the leadership for economic reform is based on the following central proposition: economic reform is good for economic development, which in turn is good for maintaining the Party's power."¹¹²

This political maneuver has been for the most part successful. Deng's broad but unstable reform coalition initially included party bureaucrats and intellectuals, both attacked during the Cultural Revolution—a common political experience that temporarily united them. In fact, the reform proposal envisioned precisely the alliance of the two—the creation of a managerial, technocratic elite. They quickly won support from millions of rural peasants who wanted personal control of land and the fruits of their labor, and from urban people who desired a more abundant supply of consumer goods and a higher standard of living. Moreover, although market reforms might indeed have diminished the role of the upper bureaucracy, at the same time they also significantly strengthened the power of lower bureaucrats (enterprise managers and local-level cadres), who benefited from their greater autonomy. This fact is worth noting, as it discloses the multifaceted complexities of a reform program that only appears to be liberalizing.

"A social form," wrote Antonio Gramsci, "'always' has marginal possibilities for further development and organizational improvement, and in particular can count on the relative weakness of the rival progressive force

as a result of its specific character and way of life. It is necessary for the dominant social form to preserve this weakness.”¹¹³ This is perhaps the most succinct formulation of one of Gramsci’s most intriguing concepts, the passive revolution, which Gramsci develops to explore the national trajectories and outcomes of change in modern European history. Gramsci attempts to identify the possibilities of marginal social change within historically and structurally imposed limits, arguing that in situations where a social group lacks the political strength to establish complete hegemony over society, it opts for a path in which its interests and demands will be “satisfied by small doses, legally, in a reformist manner—in such a way that it was possible to preserve the political and economic position of the old ruling classes” and especially to “avoid the popular masses going through a period of political experience such as occurred in France in the years of Jacobinism.”¹¹⁴ What is involved in the passive revolution is “the gradual but continuous absorption . . . of the active elements produced by allied groups—and even those which came from the antagonistic groups.”¹¹⁵ In the process of neutralizing the adversary groups and transforming them into partners, which Gramsci refers to as “transformism,” political conditions are created for the establishment of new forms of domination, but without surmounting the fundamental social contradictions.

Gramsci uses the term “passive revolution” to describe the process of the continuous reorganization of the state and the economy in order to preserve the domination of the many by the few. This notion provides a useful concept to understand the ideological and political history of China’s post-Mao reform in the context of the Cultural Revolution. Governed by the dialectic of new and old, transformation and continuity, and revolution and reform, a passive revolution attempts a molecular transformation of the existing social and political order. From this perspective, although a market-based reform program relies largely on market discipline, profit incentive, and private consumption, its political logic is nevertheless readily discernible. Hence, as the case of China’s post-Mao reforms demonstrates, a typical ruling-power strategy to cope with socioeconomic woes is first to consolidate its monopoly of power. Market mechanisms are then introduced to bring about some controlled (and controllable) openings, to shield the ruling elite from popular discontent by commodifying and depoliticizing large areas of socioeconomic life, and to buy precious time in relation to both global capitalist competition and domestic popular discontent. The more or less successful consolidation of the party-state in the wake of the Cultural Revolution was therefore for the most part due to the ability of the ruling stratum to partially absorb various social interests and demands. By the mid-1980s, a new hegemonic formation had been largely

put in place despite its fragility and incoherences, characterized by, first, a discourse of knowledge and culture that construes the intellectuals as a new form of political agency; second, a dissident intellectual politics in pursuit of an abstract conception of civil society and democracy; and third, a vulgar socialism of modernization, technological development, and material consumption that strips socialism and revolution of any meaningful political and ethical content.

In summary, it was really the suppression of the resurgent popular movement of the late 1970s and the tactfulness with which various social interests were absorbed or their expression maneuvered out of existence that laid the political foundation of the post-Mao era, on which a program of capitalist development, with all its antagonizing tendencies, was able to proceed and succeed. Thus in the post-Mao era, after mass upheaval during the Cultural Revolution had seriously threatened the party-state, economic liberalization as a passive tactic constituted a strategic moment in which the ruling stratum's attempt to preserve its controlling position was partially conjoined with the expression of popular initiatives and demands, which were strictly circumscribed. But the essential passivity of such a moment consists precisely of the reproduction of basic social and political divisions: preexisting class antagonisms are rearticulated in new forms at the same time as substantial changes are being instituted in social life. Such a strategy appropriates the support of popular classes but keeps them out of the political process, recruits sections of them as potential allies, and produces the majority as acquiescing consumers. This is the line of least resistance, so to speak. Remarkably, this political formation has remained dominant in China to this day.

EPILOGUE

FROM REVOLUTION TO REFORM

*Rethinking the Cultural Revolution
in the Present*

IN THIS BOOK, I have attempted to open up an interpretive space in which an alternative history of the Cultural Revolution that attends more to divergence, multiplicities, and critical possibilities can be written. I have explored the political and ideological dynamics of radicalizing the Cultural Revolution from below by examining several key instances of popular socioeconomic grievances and political criticism in their local circumstances. Through these currents, dominant forms of social representation were challenged, and new forms of political critique arose that transgressed the hegemonic boundaries of the Cultural Revolution. The incorporation or suppression of these tendencies constituted part of the process of restoring the authority of the party-state, which had been temporarily disrupted. In examining these instances, I have explored the ways in which transgressive tendencies emerging from the margins of the Cultural Revolution contested national trends toward demobilization and recentralization, how these tendencies constituted new forms of political subjectivity, and how existing social identities were reconfigured and given new meanings.

How is a critical history of the Cultural Revolution that concurrently criticizes its political limitations and retrieves its historical legacy possible? What is at stake in producing such a history, a history that resists dehistoricization and depoliticization? A history approached from the margins, as I hope to have shown in this book, is essential to the endeavor of excavating the long-neglected tradition of popular dissent and oppositional imagination.

A critical history of the Cultural Revolution that traces these fragmentary, illegitimate, and silenced practices and knowledges forms part of a large project of fostering, à la Michel Foucault, an “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” or recovering a “historical knowledge of struggles”—that is, ongoing political and discursive struggles against dominant discourses and established power.¹ Indeed, what is at stake in reopening the Cultural Revolution for contemporary conversations is not merely academic curiosity about a bygone simple and rustic past; rather, historical knowledge plays a vital role in political and ideological struggles.

The issue of class is of particular importance in the historical understanding of the Cultural Revolution. In this book, I have endeavored to make the Cultural Revolution thinkable as a historical and political object, but a more daunting task is how to make class thinkable. Those who initiated Mao’s continuous revolution defined it as a class war against enemies of the revolution. But what did talking about class really mean? Over the past three decades or so, in correspondence with the global shift in political and ideological fashions, many have viewed ideas such as class and class antagonisms as essentially obsolete. In contemporary China, these ideas, stigmatized for being part of a historically aberrant episode in the nation’s long march toward modernity, have been almost totally abandoned because the combined experiences of state socialism and advanced capitalism appear to have spelled the end of class as a useful analytic category and form of collective political action.

But such “hollowing out” or “discursive dyslexia” of class, as Pun Ngai and Chris Chan have argued, occurs at the very moment when socioeconomic inequalities are worsening and a Chinese working class is struggling to articulate its collective identity.² In this book, I attempt to show—through analyzing concrete historical events rather than abstract theorizing—the continued relevance of the concept of class to a critical understanding of both China’s Maoist past and its rapidly changing present. The ideas of class and class politics that I deploy here, however, owe little to the orthodox Marxist notion that being determines consciousness. Rather, “class” here refers both to the various ways in which marginalization, disempowerment, and domination are created and maintained and to the discursive configurations that give meanings to fragmented social conditions. Rather than seeking the sovereign status of a structural register of analysis, I examine social antagonisms and struggles not as derivative expressions of structural regularities but as historically mediated and discursively mobilized. This mobilization has an irreducibly political aspect, as E. P. Thompson forcefully argued. Class in its heuristic usage should be treated both analytically and historically as inseparable from its “politics”: “Classes do not

exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people . . . experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes.”³ Through examining the contingent articulations of popular protest and class politics in the Cultural Revolution, my purpose is not only to open up vexing historiographical questions with regard to the complexities of China’s turbulent late 1960s, but also to grasp the historical and theoretical lessons they have bequeathed to our contemporary project of refashioning egalitarian politics.

How does a project of documenting the transgressive moments emergent in the Cultural Revolution contribute to our understanding of the historical experience of Chinese socialism? And in what ways can an interrogation of the Cultural Revolution in the context of a radically changing China enrich our understanding of the complex history of socialism, revolutions, and postsocialist transitions in the twentieth century? In the remaining pages of this book, I return to the larger historical and political questions that originally inspired this inquiry in the belief that the critical currents I have examined have broader significance beyond the Cultural Revolution’s immediate historical context.

Two Contrasting Chinas?

Over three decades after the end of the Mao era, China’s program of market reforms, which was originally intended to rejuvenate socialism, has instead led the country down a path of increasingly capitalist development. Contemporary discussions of China’s great transformation have typically been predicated on two familiar but largely unexamined premises: first, the central role played by Deng Xiaoping, the “Grand Architect” of China’s post-Mao reforms, as he has been officially eulogized; and second, the view that the year 1978 (or 1976, the year in which Mao died) constituted a pivotal turning point, and that what has transpired during the post-Mao years marks a radical break from the Mao era. These views have been widely shared across the ideological spectrum. Mainstream commentators have often triumphantly celebrated Deng’s reforms as a second revolution that has in substance repudiated the Maoist revolutionary past, but the sense of far-reaching historical discontinuity is no less widely shared among critics on the left. For example, in his important book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey argues that China’s second revolution has in

fact formed an organic part of a capitalist counterrevolution on a global scale, or “restoration of class power,” as he famously calls it. Harvey in particular stresses the role played by Deng Xiaoping: “Future historians may well look upon the years 1978–80 as a revolutionary turning-point in the world’s social and economic history. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping took the first momentous steps towards the liberalization of a communist-ruled economy in a country that accounted for a fifth of the world’s population.”⁴

Captured forcefully in the title of William Hinton’s book *The Great Reversal*,⁵ this view of radical historical discontinuity is evident in the prevalent use of such temporally or spatially inflected metaphors as “U-turn,” “restoration,” “retreat,” and “break.” In this view, the metamorphosis of Chinese socialism was brought about by an ideological retreat from revolutionary politics to bourgeois economics, and the Deng leadership eventually succeeded in dismantling China’s socialist revolution. In the words of Li Xing:

In the second half of the last century, we have seen the development and transformation of “two contrasting Chinas”: firstly, a Maoist China that took a socialist development strategy characterized by cooperative and state (public) ownership, . . . struggle for elimination of economic and political inequalities and class privileges, utilization of human potentials, dominance of the interest of the immediate producers at the workplace and of working people in all spheres of society including control over politics and ideas. Secondly, a Dengist China that is returning to market capitalism based on privatization of ownership, marketization of the means of production and resource distribution, acceptance of economic inequalities and political privileges, . . . promotion of the interests of the privileged, professional and entrepreneurial classes, and commercialization of welfare and social security benefits.⁶

The Cultural Revolution figures centrally in this discussion. In the 1960s, Mao launched his last revolution to avert the degeneration of Chinese socialism. Since the end of the Mao era, however, this is precisely what has occurred. Again as Li Xing noted, “The situation in China today resembles so much what the Cultural Revolution was initiated to avoid. In retrospect, we can well claim that the Cultural Revolution was basically right in foreseeing the degeneration of the CCP. . . . Mao would hardly be surprised to see the restoration of capitalism in China. But he could never have imagined the depth and breadth to which his entire revolutionary cause would be subverted.”⁷

The critics’ unyielding critique of China’s capitalist path notwithstanding, their treatment of the history and politics of China’s postsocialist transition seems curiously—and symptomatically—cursory. By Harvey’s account, “In December 1978, faced with the dual difficulties of political uncertainty and economic stagnation, the Chinese leadership under Deng

Xiaoping announced a programme of economic reforms.”⁸ In a similarly sketchy fashion, Wang Hui, China’s leading new leftist thinker, wrote about the shift of the late 1970s as follows: “The end of the Cultural Revolution marked the end of a socialism characterized by perpetual revolution and the critique of capitalism. In 1978, the socialist reform movement that has lasted to this day began.”⁹

Such brevity of historical treatment, I argue, does not merely reflect academic perfunctoriness. Rather, it is indicative of a deeper critical lacuna—the absence of a historically grounded understanding of the vicissitudes of Chinese socialism, with all its complexities and contradictions. Although I find the criticisms of China’s capitalist transformation compelling, my focus here is on how to interpret such changes. How did capitalism with Chinese characteristics evolve from specific historical circumstances, mediated by existing social relations and configurations of power? Clearly, there is a methodological stake here. Social changes of this scale, as Harvey rightfully emphasizes, “do not occur by accident.” Hence it is pertinent to inquire by what means and paths the restoration processes evolved from particular historical junctures as they did. With this in mind, we should approach postsocialist transition in a way that is more historically situated as market reforms were crucially mediated by existing sociopolitical relations and derived their significance from overdetermining historical contexts. The crucial question here is not so much whether the glowing images of Mao’s China, once colorfully illustrated by the rosy cheeks of young proletarian women on the front covers of the *China Pictorial*, should be debunked. Many such idealized views that were once popular have long been rendered obsolete. The challenge today facing critics of capitalism with Chinese characteristics, in my view, lies in the development of a historically grounded critique with regard to the experience of Chinese socialism. Such a critique, of which a history of the Cultural Revolution forms an essential part, is vital at the present moment. How far, we ask, can our critique of capitalist development in China go without being reinforced by a vigorous scrutiny of the very revolutionary history that has been eclipsed? And how do we grapple with issues such as restoration and revolution, the new and the old, as integral parts of a single historical problematic?

Ruling-Class Transformation: Overcoming the 1978 Divide

A critical history of Chinese socialism is much needed in order to understand its contemporary changes. How do we characterize the structure

and dynamics of social-class relations in post-1949 China? There is no doubt that class in Chinese socialism is a thorny issue. Richard Kraus, the author of perhaps the best book on the subject, once wrote that “there still exists no adequate theory of socialist class relationships,”¹⁰ and his remark is no less true today than it was over three decades ago.

Any critical reassessment of Chinese socialism must begin with the fact that the historical achievements of the Chinese Revolution were unmistakable. Led by a revolutionary party with vast popular support, the protracted struggle fashioned a dilapidated China into a modern nation-state. After 1949, the new state abolished private ownership by expropriation from the property-owning elites. However, despite the regime’s broad accomplishments, we should also recognize—as Mao did over half a century ago—that the Communist-led revolution did not succeed in eradicating all significant social and political inequalities, although it eliminated many preexisting forms of inequality and profoundly modified the rest. The historical outcome of one of the greatest revolutions in the twentieth century, socialist China found itself embedded in the capitalist world-economy and under intense military and economic pressure from the hegemonic powers. In adopting the classic Soviet strategy of what Immanuel Wallerstein called the “mercantilist semiwithdrawal from the world-economy,”¹¹ centralized economic planning and control of resources by a powerful bureaucracy vastly enhanced the state’s capacity to extract surplus labor and mobilize the population for rapid capital accumulation, and this in turn made possible the rise of self-interested state managers and professional experts. In spite of the people’s constitutionally enshrined status as the master of the state, the revolution essentially declassed Chinese society by leveling preexisting class hierarchies, while new social and class antagonisms emerged. With the concentration of power in the state, the political movements and apparatuses once used so effectively to dismantle prerevolutionary inequalities themselves gave rise to new forms of domination. Unlike capitalism as typically understood, the bureaucratic stratum possessed no private ownership of the means of production. Strictly speaking, as some dissident rebels came to realize long ago, its property was the state. Economic extraction was achieved by the state’s monopoly of coercive power, characteristically unmediated by market relations. Labor power did not take the form of a commodity; it was, in the words of one scholar, literally “merged with the means of production.”¹² The result was that collective or public ownership existed largely as a legal fiction.

These facts have great relevance not only for our understanding of the Cultural Revolution but also for a critical analysis of Chinese socialism and its postsocialist mutations. Needless to say, neoliberalization does not oc-

cur in a social or political vacuum, and market reforms are mediated by existing social and political relations in overdetermined historical contexts. China's new market society was not some historical damp clay that Beijing's Grand Architect could mold at will. Rather than the result of some master blueprint, such changes would resemble bricolage—a form of political do-it-yourself or improvised adaptations to the existing situation that recombine apparently heterogeneous elements that, in the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss, “cannot be defined in terms of a project.”¹³ As Antonio Gramsci observed, the tendency to make sense of social transformation in terms of some abstract, reifying conception of leaders results first and foremost from the analyst's failure to heed one of the most important principles of historical and political analysis: the necessity to “distinguish organic movements . . . from movements which may be termed ‘conjunctural.’”¹⁴

Invoking the experience of the Chinese Revolution, William Hinton summarizes the thesis of capitalist restoration through the vivid metaphor of a revolutionary prairie fire: “A single spark . . . ignited a prairie fire that carried all before it, bringing more change to China in a few decades than two millennia had previously brought forth. But now the fire has burned itself out, and, as the flames die down, it becomes apparent that change has not been deep. Fire burned the foliage off, but the roots of the old civilization survived and are now sending up vigorous sprouts that push aside and overwhelm, in one sphere after another, all revolutionary innovations.”¹⁵ Hinton's metaphor, however, is premised on a problematic conception of social temporality, namely, the unmediated determination of the present by remnants of the past. Revolutions do not merely battle or break with the past but also produce new antagonisms. History cannot simply be rolled backward. If it could, it would probably be a long time before capitalism spontaneously grew back in China from the deep roots that had survived the revolutionary fire.

The events in China, however, suggest a different historical scenario. The emergent capitalist system has been built in the absence of an established bourgeois class. Telescoped into less than three decades, China's historic transition from state socialism to postsocialist capitalism did not occur as the result of the intervention of a bourgeoisie of private proprietors as typically understood, as the small entrepreneurial elements that proliferated in the early 1980s did not constitute a significant class force to press for major economic change. Although there has been no lack of petty private entrepreneurs who got rich, the real origins of Chinese capitalism, as Meisner contended, “were not to be found in the petty commercial capitalism of the cities but in the foreign trade and investment that passed through Deng Xiaoping's ‘open doors’ along the South China coast—and

in the Chinese Communist state and its bureaucrats who controlled passage through those doors.”¹⁶ China’s capitalist revolution, in fact, has been spearheaded in major part by class forces from above in conjunction with the rise of a class of private entrepreneurs from below, who are critically dependent on the ruling political elite and are often co-opted into the existing structure of power.¹⁷ Hence, if the introduction of market relations has led to the restoration of capitalism in China, it is in no small part because they have supplied fresh opportunities for the continuous—but previously amorphous—processes of ruling-class transformation to accelerate and eventually break out. That is, the ruling elite have been able to use their political power for more or less direct economic gains by converting state properties into private capital, or, more generally speaking, by dis-embedding—to borrow an influential idea from Karl Polanyi—public assets from the institutional matrix in which they had been previously embedded and redeploying them in an ostensibly self-regulating economic sphere.¹⁸ Thus marketization does not necessarily bring about fundamental changes in the structure and organization of class power, but it transforms and displaces its fields of application by multiplying the nodes and circuits where ruling-class power can be deployed. Market disparities are compounded or amplified by bureaucratic prerogatives. In China today, a new historical bloc, the unholy alliance between capital and state power, is clearly in the making.

The appearance of reversal or radical break notwithstanding, much of what has happened since 1978 has its origins in the nature of the regime before 1976. What has occurred in China over the last three decades is in significant part the organic outgrowth of preexisting social relations and political processes; it is the continuous but uneven process of bureaucratic reorganization and ruling-class transformation, which has unfolded through the parallel process of market liberalization. As I have argued in this book, the Cultural Revolution severely undermined China’s state-socialist system. The ruling stratum’s efforts to preserve the system by suppressing challenges, containing or neutralizing ruptures, and rechanneling dissent, however, unexpectedly led to its profound permutation. Such changes began, at first rather unobtrusively, with the piecemeal measures of economic reform in the early 1980s. The decentralizing policy that underlay China’s market transition in the 1980s and early 1990s was initially an effort on the part of the reform leadership to increase local and enterprise initiative at the expense of rigid central bureaucracies. The policy laid the foundation for China’s ubiquitous local state corporatism in which state and entrepreneurial functions became symbiotically intertwined, and Leninist institutions and practices were redeployed to take advantage of the new market

conditions. This would soon become both the engine of economic dynamism and a source of chaos.¹⁹ Such decentralizing, market-oriented policies immensely empowered local bureaucrats and enterprise managers, many of whom appropriated public assets through corruption or profited from their control of vital resources. The conversion of state-owned enterprises into profit-seeking units was also paralleled by the reduction of workers' welfare benefits. During the 1980s, the erosion of the Maoist social compact was still in large part cushioned by the rising income made possible by new market opportunities. By the late 1980s, however, the impetus generated by the new hybrid economy had begun to falter. The market, which had hitherto yielded salutary results by invigorating a rigid and stifled state economy, began to show its injurious consequences. Soaring inflation, which resulted from the partial deregulation of prices of agricultural products and basic necessities, eroded the uneven gains in wages and living standards enjoyed by the urban population.²⁰ The increasing hardship among the general populace went hand in hand with pervasive official profiteering and bureaucratic corruption, through which many officials and their relatives built up enormous wealth and transformed themselves into China's first generation of red bourgeoisie. By the late 1980s, China's economic reform was already evoking memories of the corruption normally associated with the Kuomintang regime in the late 1940s, which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had once condemned. These developments provoked widespread popular anger and loss of public confidence in the government and its reform programs. The potentially explosive mix of worsening economic conditions and rampant official corruption gave rise to pervasive social discontent and culminated in the eruption of a massive protest movement in 1989—a countermovement (as Karl Polanyi would put it) of societal self-protection mobilized in reaction against the growing socioeconomic inequalities and encroachment on the commons by the powerful few.

As ideologically amorphous as it was, the 1989 movement enjoyed a highly diverse popular base, involving students, intellectuals, and workers, as well as other ordinary urbanites. Looking on themselves as the heirs to the long tradition of student activism in modern China, students raised a miscellany of demands: freedom of the press, the right to organize freely, and curbing corruption, among others. Although relatively small in numbers, students became politically potent when they articulated the grievances of other social groups against an arbitrary and corrupt bureaucracy. Along with intellectuals, they were joined by lower-level government workers, teachers, and, significantly, hundreds of thousands of workers. Led by a small number of activists, some of whom had been schooled in

the Cultural Revolution, workers formed their own independent organizations. What brought workers and students together was a common cry for democracy. For workers, however, democracy meant less a particular form of government than liberation from bureaucratic domination in their everyday life. As sociologist Anita Chan has written about the meaning of “democracy” and “liberation”: “When the residents of Beijing and other cities throughout China overcame their fears and poured into the streets in a vast sea that swept aside the forces of authority, they experienced an exhilaration of release, what they called *jiefang*, liberation. Some years ago, when I conducted interviews for a book on the Cultural Revolution, again and again people remembered having felt that same heady sense of ‘liberation’ in 1966–67 when they had first joined colleagues in casting free from subservience to their work-unit leadership.”²¹ The participation of workers in the protests was the most alarming feature to the CCP leadership and convinced Deng Xiaoping that the movement was a rebellion that had to be decisively crushed.

The Cultural Revolution left a significant mark on popular protests in post-Mao China. Repertoires of collective political action popularized during the Cultural Revolution—such as singing revolutionary songs, marches, rallies, and hunger strikes—had a great impact on the 1989 protest movement. The haunting specter of the Cultural Revolution also had a crucial impact on the Deng regime’s interpretation of—and thereby reaction to—the movement.²² Traumatized by their experience two decades earlier and obsessively fearful of what was portrayed in internal official communications as a “second Cultural Revolution,”²³ the leaders were convinced that undermining the authority of the party-state would result in chaos. Deng Xiaoping, for instance, was particularly alarmed by the rise of autonomous student and worker organizations and saw in every instance of popular political activism an ominous reactivation of the upheaval of the late 1960s.

The brutal suppression of the 1989 protest movement paved the way for radical privatization in the 1990s, rationalized by the neoliberal ideological currency. The post-Mao regime’s promotion of a market economy, as I have argued in Chapter 6, had its origin in the self-defensive measures of the ruling elite in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. Once started, however, such processes took on a life of their own. By the late 1990s, the Chinese state’s rhetorical commitment to socialism no longer posed any serious obstacle to the following conclusion: with the interpenetration of capital and political life, the workings of state power have been inseparably intertwined with capital. What is usually referred to as neoliberalism in the Chinese context, as Wang Hui has stressed, in fact enjoys a special

relationship “with the proliferation of interest groups within the state itself. . . . The principal embodiment of neoliberalism lay in the benefits accruing to social groups [formed] through the process of the creation of interest groups within the state structure.”²⁴ Chinese sociologist Sun Liping has coined the term “total capital” (*zongtixing ziben*) to portray the coalescence of different forms of capital or power that has become increasingly salient: “In China . . . all the capital of society to a considerable extent takes the form of total capital that, through the operation of political power, is virtually undifferentiated. Thus, the formation of elites in China during its market transition has not been a process of replacing different types of elites with new elites, but a rise of a new group of elites who control the total capital consisting of cultural, political, and economic capital. Their primary capital is the political or administrative power in their own hands or those of their parents.”²⁵

Such processes, I should note, are by no means unique to China’s post-socialist transition. Countries in the former Soviet bloc had a remarkably similar experience. The Hungarian sociologist Elemer Hankiss, for example, suggested shortly after the collapse of state socialism that the old political elite would become the new “grande bourgeoisie” with the marketization of the economy. Jadwiga Staniszkis, a Polish scholar, famously wrote about the rise of a distinct type of “political capitalism,” in which the former *nomenklatura* would metamorphose into a new capitalist class. Instead of from redistribution to market, as sociologist David Stark has aptly argued, the changes were in fact from plan to clan, and what is conventionally presented as an economic process of marketization might be more fruitfully understood as a process of reshuffling property rights—processes powerfully conditioned by the political logic of the state-socialist regime.²⁶ Evidently, to denounce these processes as mere corruption grossly trivializes their historical and political significance. What has occurred in China (and in other postsocialist or post-Communist societies) is in fact nothing short of the radical transformation of the societal power structure, through which the new enclosures, accumulation by dispossession, and the entrenchment of the money-power nexus have often been spearheaded by bureaucratic power holders and their well-placed cronies. Such systematic conversion of public assets—the nominal commons in the Mao era—into means of private capital accumulation constitutes part of the more general process of the privatization of political and economic power.²⁷

The key to understanding China’s post-Mao shift of course and its economic ascent lies in the Mao era, which laid the foundation for both the feats and the deep contradictions of the reform era. China’s apparent economic success—its intensifying antagonisms and uncertain prospects

notwithstanding—was in major part a result of the fact that the country was one of the last large geographic territories to be incorporated into the capitalist world-economy, and its vast, well-disciplined labor reserve was mobilized to jump-start a global capitalism that had been in prolonged structural crisis and desperately in need of new markets or lower costs.²⁸ The main attraction of China for global capital, however, has not merely been its seemingly endless supply of cheap labor—there are plenty of such labor reserves around the globe. Rather, in addition to the substantial economic infrastructures achieved during the Mao era, as well as the relatively high human capital endowment in education and health,²⁹ China's appeal also lies in the capacities of its state organizations to maintain the kind of political environment hospitable for capital accumulation, which means the maintenance of discipline and the guarantee of stability. This involves, in particular, an authoritarian state apparatus that relentlessly prevents labor self-organization and suppresses popular unrest for the production of a disciplined (and low-priced) labor force. As Giovanni Arrighi argued, the expansion of the capitalist economy requires “political structures endowed with ever-more extensive and complex organizational capabilities to control the social and political environment of capital accumulation.”³⁰

Therefore, although market expansion is undoubtedly driven by the logic of capitalist economic accumulation, it derives its political significance from existing political and historical circumstances. In China, as in the rest of the world, as Karl Polanyi wrote, “Economic history reveals that the emergence of national markets was in no way the result of the gradual and spontaneous emancipation of the economic sphere from governmental control.” Instead, it has been the outcome of interventions “on the part of the government which imposed the market organization on society for noneconomic ends.”³¹ Far from being the unmediated result of deliberate ideological design by particular leaders, however, capitalism with Chinese characteristics is rather the outcome of the haphazard and largely reactive tactics of the country's ruling stratum to achieve temporary political appeasement. In initiating market-oriented reforms and inserting China into the circuits of global capital, the Chinese ruling elite has irrevocably tied its political power and economic fortune—and even its political survival—to the imperative of capital accumulation, both domestic and global. In the space of three decades, and through the entanglement of manifold strategies, reactions, and negotiations by a multiplicity of dispersed agents, these essentially passive (in the Gramscian sense) movements and tactics have progressively evolved into active assaults on a number of key institutions of China's state-socialist order. During this

time, China has been transformed from one of the world's poorest but most egalitarian societies to one of the fastest-growing but most unequal economies. The momentous socioeconomic and political changes that have engulfed China since the end of the Mao era qualify as nothing less than a revolution, or in fact a counterrevolution from above. This is no small leap forward, to say the least.

The Incomplete Continuous Revolution

Launched nearly half a century ago as an attempt to revitalize socialism, the Cultural Revolution was deeply rooted in the collective history and popular tradition of the Chinese Revolution. But despite its aspirations, I have argued in this book that as a political project the Cultural Revolution was ultimately ineffectual. Maoist politics failed to develop an adequate understanding of the structure and dynamics of the social and political inequalities of Chinese socialism. From the movement's inception, the Maoist leadership failed to specify satisfactorily its primary objectives, as well as its targets. Different groups interpreted the movement differently, often in accordance with their own social interests and political positions. The targets of attack in the Cultural Revolution—defined in accordance with an essentialized and reified conception of class—were often personalized and became highly diffused or confused: in the violent days during the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards attacked everything and anything, including popular cultural practices and artifacts, former propertied classes, capitalist roaders in the party, arts and literature, dress and hairstyles, and much more. The list of targets belonging to the imaginary universe of class enemies could expand endlessly. The concepts “proletarian” and “bourgeois” became hopelessly twisted terms used (and misused) to signify political loyalty, ideological correctness, and moral purity.

Spectacularly vulgarized, the terms “class” and “class struggle” were stretched to near lunacy, where they became pointless. As class politics imploded, various social agents picked up its disparate fragments and deployed them for their own particular uses. Generating immense antagonisms that percolated throughout the social fabric, the resulting hyperpoliticization greatly strained and distorted China's social and political life, all in the exalted name of revolution. Suffice it to say that after Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic policy of return to normalcy—his call for economic development and modernization as based on “stability and unity”—was widely welcomed. As many came to see Deng as one who would lead China out of political turmoil, narratives of the Cultural

Revolution's excessive violence obscured, and still obscure, the newly emergent domination and inequalities rooted more in the complex workings of normalized political economy than in the state's arbitrary power.

In spite of its militant vigilance against degenerative tendencies in a socialist state, late Maoism failed to adequately address the problem of class formation in post-1949 China. By focusing on bureaucratism, revisionism, and various forms of distributional privileges, Mao's continuous revolution attacked individual bureaucrats and their ideological affiliations much more than the system of power. The Cultural Revolution might indeed have temporarily interrupted the consolidation of the incipient bureaucratic class by attempting to combat bourgeois selfishness and to exhort cadres to serve the people rather than themselves. A variety of institutional innovations accompanied such undertakings. Key among these were encouraging mass initiatives to make the bureaucracy more accountable, as well as educational policies to prevent social and political closure so that party and state officials would be relatively heterogeneous in social origins. Many of these experiments were constructive. However, their implementation was not expected to eradicate bureaucratized power but instead to prevent it from becoming entrenched and solidified. In the end, it was perhaps no accident that the Cultural Revolution was deemed cultural in the sense that the struggle to instill a proletarian worldview to counter bourgeois consciousness was often viewed by the movement's initiators as its hallmark.³² Indeed, it may even be possible to argue that such attempts at revolutionization through culture ipso facto represent the highest achievement of Maoism, as well as its ultimate theoretical and historical limits.

The more radical political possibilities of the Cultural Revolution, as I have examined in this book, were pressed by a number of young critics and activists whose antibureaucratic and democratic impulses were accompanied by an acute concern with the organization of political power in the socialist state. Invoking the historical example of the Paris Commune, they claimed that China's bureaucratic bourgeoisie with its monopoly of state power would have to be toppled in order to establish a society in which the people truly could self-govern. In suppressing its own rebellious children, Maoism soon exhausted its political energy. Thus, despite its apparent militancy, the Cultural Revolution failed as an experiment in radically transforming socialism in postrevolutionary Chinese society even though the reforms that it had spawned had mitigated some of the most glaring manifestations of social and political inequality.

What are the lessons to be drawn from the history of Chinese socialism and revolution? What is to be learned from the experience of the Cultural

Revolution and the crisis of socialism that it both exemplified and aggravated? What do socialist and revolutionary projects mean today? I believe that one lesson is essential: socialism without substantively meaningful democratic institutions and active popular participation is not only ethically indefensible but also historically infeasible.

Democracy is a much used and abused term, and so are revolution, socialism, and class struggle. There is a widely held assumption in both China and the West today that free-market capitalism and democracy are all but the same. Many observers—especially those who embrace the Chinese state’s policy of marketization and privatization—wishfully picture the most important choice facing China today as between the market, which is made to stand for freedom and democracy, and the continued domination of a repressive state. Indeed, the power of such ideological triumphalism lies precisely in its capacity to appropriate, neutralize, and domesticate such inherently subversive political terms as democracy and freedom. Therefore, it remains a vital challenge for us to envision more inclusive and robust ways to think about socialism, revolution, democracy, and freedom as integrally constitutive of a common political project, their inherent tensions notwithstanding. The central problem is therefore how to develop a socialist project, as E. P. Thompson once put it, “which is both democratic and revolutionary in its means, its strategy and objectives,”³³ and how to ensure that revolutions do not transmogrify into their opposite and become the basis of new forms of domination and exploitation.

Historically, socialism and communism emerged as powerful alternatives to the pervasive inequality and poverty associated with the rise of capitalism. But in the twentieth century, the egalitarian potentials of actually existing socialism—or “really non-existing socialism,” as one scholar called it³⁴—were almost without exception frustrated by both the totalizing logic of the capitalist world-system and the national historical circumstances in which it had arisen. Virtually every major successful socialist revolution in the twentieth century, as James Scott has written, “ended by creating a state more powerful than the one it overthrew, a state that in turn was able to extract more resources from and exercise more control over the very population it was designed to serve.”³⁵ In producing authoritarian political formations that, although often decidedly noncapitalist or even anticapitalist, concentrated political power and socioeconomic resources, all in the name of socialism, revolution, and the people, the nationalization of economic property without the concurrent construction of alternative forms of social relations created only a legal fiction. Marx prophetically argued that to abolish private property and make everyone into a wage laborer would not amount to genuine emancipation but only to

transforming society into “the abstract capitalist.”³⁶ The historical distortion and deformation of socialism in China, as in the Soviet bloc, lay first and foremost in the fact that the socialist project became inextricably intertwined with its statist form. The continued predominance of such alienated sociopolitical relations had fateful historical consequences. The culmination of this process would have to await specific conjunctures of both national and global conditions, when state resources managed and controlled by the bureaucratic power holders became appropriated by those who were their nominal guardians, and the immense wealth thus accumulated was drawn into the circuit of capitalist production and exchange. The path of socialist market reforms usually begins as the passive strategy of the ruling class—in the Gramscian sense—to elude crisis and for self-preservation. But eventually it turns into their exit strategy, that is, their self-transformation from bureaucratic power holders to capital owners.

History, Lenin once noted, knows all sorts of metamorphoses. In light of the momentous transformations in China and elsewhere in the world, was socialism in its actually existing forms ever a stop along the shining path to Socialism? Would it be entirely preposterous to suggest that socialism as such might indeed have been—uncannily—a detour in the long history of capitalism through all its variety and metamorphoses? Should we not ask whether, instead of being the heroic gravedigger, actually existing socialism might not have served as the midwife of capitalism or even of an especially unruly kind of it? Mao’s last revolution was a valuable but painfully inadequate attempt to address these issues. The critical question facing us today is how to produce a historically grounded analysis of the structure and dynamics of China’s socialist and revolutionary past, and for this project, a critical history of the Cultural Revolution is vital. Therefore, a key message of this book is that a coherent dual critique—a critique of both capital and state power, of the logics of bureaucratic domination and capitalist accumulation—is imperative. Our critique of capitalist development in contemporary China calls for a more robust and historically grounded criticism of actually existing socialism—an unrelenting self-critique, so to speak. This is the most important lesson to be learned from the now century-old history of China’s revolution and socialism in general and from the experience of the Cultural Revolution in particular.

Appendix
Notes
Bibliography
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A P P E N D I X

LIST OF SELECTED CHINESE
CHARACTERS

<i>baguan geming</i>	罢官革命
<i>bi men si guo</i>	闭门思过
<i>bianlun hui</i>	辩论会
<i>biantian</i>	变天
<i>bingtuan</i>	兵团
<i>caoxing chengji</i>	操行成绩
<i>Changsha lao</i>	长沙佬
<i>chengfen</i>	成份
<i>chou laojiu</i>	臭老九
<i>chuanlian</i>	串联
<i>chunjing</i>	纯净
<i>chushen bu youji, daolu ke xuanze</i>	出生不由己, 道路可选择
<i>chushen lun</i>	出身论
<i>dalianhe</i>	大联合
<i>da minzhu</i>	大民主
<i>dameng chuxing</i>	大梦初醒
<i>dazahui</i>	大杂烩
<i>diaoban</i>	调班
<i>difang zhuyi</i>	地方主义

<i>duo zhongxin lun</i>	多中心论
<i>erci geming lun</i>	二次革命论
<i>fen shu keng ru</i>	焚书坑儒
<i>fengkuang de niandai</i>	疯狂的年代
<i>fuke nao geming</i>	复课闹革命
<i>gaichao huandai</i>	改朝换代
Gao Si	高司
<i>gaogan ban</i>	高干班
<i>geren chengfen</i>	个人成份
Gong Lian	工联
<i>guanliao zhuyizhe jieji</i>	官僚主义者阶级
<i>hei gui</i>	黑鬼
<i>heng pi</i>	横批
<i>heping jiefang</i>	和平解放
<i>hong lian jun</i>	红联军
<i>hong waiwei</i>	红外围
<i>hu zhi ze lai, hui zhi ze qu</i>	呼之则来，挥之则去
<i>huai toutou</i>	坏头头
<i>huaiyi yiqie, dadao yiqie</i>	怀疑一切，打倒一切
<i>jiating chushen</i>	家庭出身
<i>jieji luxian</i>	阶级路线
<i>ji jin de zaofanpai</i>	激进的造反派
<i>jingji zhuyi</i>	经济主义
<i>jingji zhuyi feng</i>	经济主义风
<i>jingjian</i>	精简
<i>jiudi nao geming</i>	就地闹革命
<i>jiuren gemin</i>	揪人革命
<i>jiushizhu</i>	救世主
<i>jizuo</i>	极左
<i>jun guan</i>	军管
<i>kuangwang ren</i>	狂妄人
<i>lao bao</i>	老保
<i>laozi pingchang er qiqiang</i>	老子平常儿骑墙
<i>laozi yingxiong er haohan, laozi fandong er hundan</i>	老子英雄儿好汉， 老子反动儿混蛋

<i>laozi yingxiong er jieban, laozhi fandong er zaofan</i>	老子英雄儿接班, 老子反动儿造反
Lian Si	联司
<i>lin xiong</i>	临兄
<i>louwang zhiyu</i>	漏网之鱼
<i>mingyi gongzi</i>	名义工资
<i>minkan</i>	民刊
<i>nei ding</i>	内定
<i>neng jin neng chu, neng duo neng shao</i>	能进能出, 能多能少
<i>niugui sheshen</i>	牛鬼蛇神
<i>niupeng</i>	牛棚
<i>qianzi dawang</i>	签字大王
<i>qinza renyuan</i>	勤杂人员
Quanhongzong	全红总
<i>qujie gongchang</i>	区街工厂
<i>renduo liliang da</i>	人多力量大
<i>san duo</i>	三多
<i>san xiangxin</i>	三相信
<i>san zhi liang jun</i>	三支两军
<i>sanjiehe</i>	三结合
<i>sanlunche</i>	三轮车
<i>shehui guanxi</i>	社会关系
Shengwulian	省无联
<i>shi wu qian li, kong qian jue hou</i>	史无前例, 空前绝后
<i>shiji gongzi</i>	实际工资
<i>si da</i>	四大
Si San Pai	四三派
<i>siliu gong</i>	四六工
<i>taishanghuang</i>	太上皇
<i>te jia ji</i>	特甲级
<i>te yi ji</i>	特乙级
<i>tequan jieji</i>	特权阶级
<i>tequan jiecheng</i>	特权阶层
<i>tuifei youli</i>	颓废有理
<i>tuotai huangu</i>	脱胎换骨

<i>wendou</i>	文斗
<i>wudou</i>	武斗
<i>wuxian chongbai, yongyuan chongbai</i>	无限崇拜, 永远崇拜
<i>xiao baota</i>	小宝塔
<i>xiao gaogan</i>	小高干
<i>xiao yezhu</i>	小业主
<i>xiaoyao pai</i>	逍遥派
<i>xinsheng zichan jieji</i>	新生资产阶级
<i>xuanya lema</i>	悬崖勒马
<i>xuetong lun</i>	血统论
<i>ya fei la renmin yao jiefang</i>	亚非拉人民要解放
<i>yewu</i>	业务
<i>yi bing</i>	一兵
<i>yi cu bu yi xi</i>	宜粗不宜细
<i>yi gong yi nong</i>	亦工亦农
<i>yida sanfan</i>	一打三反
<i>yitihua</i>	一体化
<i>zao hukou fan youli</i>	造户口反有理
<i>zhan cao chu gen</i>	斩草除根
<i>zhengque duidai</i>	正确对待
<i>zhengwu</i>	政务
<i>zhengzhi shencha</i>	政治审查
<i>zhi nong</i>	支农
Zhi Nong Si	支农司
<i>zhi zuo</i>	支左
<i>zhilian zhan</i>	支联站
<i>zhiyuan</i>	职员
<i>zhong you</i>	中右
<i>zhua geming, cu shengchan</i>	抓革命, 促生产
<i>zhuan'an</i>	专案
<i>zilaihong</i>	自来红
<i>zongtixing ziben</i>	总体性资本

NOTES

I. The Unthinkable Revolution

1. For the impact of the Cultural Revolution on politics and culture in the West, see Andrew Ross, "Mao Zedong's Impact on Cultural Politics in the West," *Cultural Politics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 5–21; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002); Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chap. 6. For Maoism's influence in the Third World, see Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), pt. 3; Robert J. Alexander, *International Maoism in the Developing World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); and Alexander C. Cook, "Third World Maoism," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 288–312.
2. Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 268–269, 291.
3. Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays, 1971–1986*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 188, 207. In another example, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri contend that China's Cultural Revolution answered "the desire for more democratic forms of organization and autonomy from centralized military and political control." "The image of China thus served as an alternative to the Soviet model and the various Communist parties that followed the Soviet line, but it also posed the notion of a full and free

- engagement of the masses with no centralized control.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 76–77.
4. Alessandro Russo, “The Probable Defeat: Preliminary Notes on the Chinese Cultural Revolution,” in *New Asian Marxism*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 311, 313.
 5. Anne F. Thurston, “Victims of China’s Cultural Revolution: The Invisible Wounds; Part I,” *Pacific Affairs* 57, no. 4 (1984): 605–606.
 6. Feng Jikai, *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China’s Cultural Revolution* (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1996), v.
 7. Ba Jin, “A Cultural Revolution Museum,” in *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*, ed. Geremie Barme and John Minford (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 381–382. For an interesting article questioning the usefulness of the Holocaust analogy, see Vera Schwarcz, “The Burden of Memory: The Cultural Revolution and the Holocaust,” *China Information* 11, no. 1 (1996): 1–13.
 8. For a widely cited book calling for “farewell to revolution,” see Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu, *Gaobie geming: Huiwang ershibiji Zhongguo* [Farewell to revolution: Reflecting on twentieth-century China] (Hong Kong: Tiandi chubanshe, 1997); for a thoughtful critique that stresses the continued relevance of studying China’s revolutionary history in understanding the country’s contemporary transformation, see Elizabeth J. Perry, “Studying Chinese Politics: Farewell to Revolution?,” *China Journal*, no. 57 (2007): 1–22.
 9. A typical example is Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a more subtle and sophisticated application of this logic, see François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
 10. Between 1993 and 2006, more than 60 million jobs were lost in Chinese state-owned and urban collective-sector enterprises. William Hurst, *The Chinese Worker after Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–2. Sun Liping, a prominent Chinese sociologist, has famously warned that increasing inequalities have begun to produce a “fractured” (*duanlie*) society in which people in the same country live in separate worlds, and boundaries between different social strata are becoming “ossified” (*gubua*). See Sun Liping, *Zhuanxing yu duanlie: Gai ge yilai Zhongguo shehui jiegou de bianqian* [Transition and fracture: Changes in China’s social structure since the reform] (Beijing: Tsinghua daxue chubanshe, 2004).
 11. Feng Wang, *Boundaries and Categories: Rising Inequality in Post-socialist Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 4.
 12. David S. G. Goodman and Xiaowei Zang, “The New Rich in China: The Dimensions of Social Change,” in *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives*, ed. David S. G. Goodman (London: Routledge, 2008), 2. In 2012, a university research group in China estimated that the Gini index reached 0.61 in 2010, “a shockingly high level” according to the news report. See “China’s Gini Index at 0.61, University Report Says,” <http://english.caixin.com/2012>

- 12-10/100470648.html, accessed April 4, 2013. It is notable that China's National Bureau of Statistics has stopped releasing the Gini index since 2001, saying that income data for the high-income groups are incomplete.
13. "Sany Head Tops China Billionaire List in Record Year," <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/09/07/uk-sany-head-tops-china-billionaire-list-idINLNE78601V20110907>, accessed April 12, 2012.
 14. State authorities declared that such stories were fake and accused them of quoting data fabricated by "anti-Chinese elements" overseas. The disputed number, however, were corroborated by a Boston Consulting Group report that concluded that less than 1 percent of households in China hold more than 70 percent of the nation's personal wealth, and the richest 0.1 percent of the nation controls approximately 45 percent of China's wealth. See Boston Consulting Group, *Wealth Markets in China: The Beginning of the Race for China's Rich* (Boston: Boston Consulting Group, 2008), 8.
 15. For the Mao fever in the 1990s, see Geremie Barme, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).
 16. For examples of the growing literature in English that critically reevaluates the Cultural Revolution, see Alain Badiou, "The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?," trans. Bruno Bosteels, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 13, no. 3 (2005): 481–514; Joel Andreas, "Battling over Political and Cultural Power during the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *Theory and Society* 31 (2002): 463–519; Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Arif Dirlik, *Marxism in the Chinese Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 164–226; Dongping Han, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Life and Change in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008); Alessandro Russo, "How to Translate 'Cultural Revolution,'" *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (2006): 673–682; and Mobo C. F. Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).
 17. Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Contemporary Psychology* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 1996).
 18. Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 5.
 19. This was reported in the Chinese edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, September 26, 2011. In 2011, it was reported that China's internal security budget for the first time surpassed the nation's defense budget. See *Economist*, March 10, 2011.
 20. Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 283. "Drifting population" refers to China's deracinated rural migrant laborers.
 21. *Ibid.*, 4. In an unconfirmed story that circulated in China during the months leading up to the centenary of Mao's birth in December 1993, it was reported that some workers at a factory in Sichuan believed that Chairman Mao had established an industrial complex in the afterlife that he ran in accordance with the socialist principles he had espoused. Despondent over the capitalist-style labor exploitation of the reform era and mindful that Mao had claimed

- that he would go into the mountains to start a guerrilla-style revolution all over again if China “turned capitalist,” some workers reportedly even committed suicide, hoping to join the Chairman’s underworld revolution. *Ibid.*, 3.
22. Lee, *Against the Law*, 144–145. For how memories of the Maoist past influence contemporary China’s contentious politics, see also Elizabeth J. Perry, “‘To Rebel Is Justified’: Cultural Revolution Influences on Contemporary Chinese Protest,” in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered: Beyond Purge and Holocaust*, ed. Kam-ye Law (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 262–281; Ching Kwan Lee, “The Revenge of History: Collective Memories and Labor Protests in Northeast China,” *Ethnography* 1, no. 2 (2000): 217–237; and Feng Chen, “Privatization and Its Discontents in Chinese Factories,” *China Quarterly*, no. 185 (2006): 42–60.
 23. *Renmin ribao* [People’s daily], March 15, 2012. Wen made the stunning warning shortly before the purge of Bo Xilai, the flamboyant party chief of the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing, whose populist and Maoist rhetoric had much alarmed a Chinese leadership obsessed with political cohesion and stability.
 24. The survey page was promptly removed by state censors, but its cached images circulate widely on the Chinese Internet. See <http://difangwenge.org/read.php?tid=8646&page=1&toread=1#tpc>, accessed May 21, 2013. According to a 2013 news report, an increasing number of Chinese college students embrace “radical leftism” and advocate “a return to the socialist state that Communist Party founder Mao Zedong favored and that Chinese leaders for the last generation have tried to put behind them.” “Among China’s Students, Some Hope for a Return to Mao-Era Policies,” *Miami Herald*, August 6, 2013.
 25. It was reported in 2013 that Chinese authorities had banned a number of politically sensitive topics at universities, including, among others, civil rights, freedom of the press, the “privileged capitalist class” (*quan’gui zichan jieji*), and “historical mistakes of the Communist Party” (such as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward famine). *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 20, 2013.
 26. For a full English translation of this document, see James T. Myers, Jürgen Domes, and Erik von Groeling, eds., *Chinese Politics: Documents and Analysis*, vol. 1 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 43–94.
 27. Stig Thogersen and Soren Clausen, “New Reflections in the Mirror: Local Chinese Gazetteers (*Difangzhi*) in the 1980s,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 27 (1992): 166, 175. The consequence of such an approach, one Chinese historian complained, was that “many gazetteers convey the impression that the Cultural Revolution never came to their area.” *Ibid.*, 176. For a fascinating account of the production of local gazetteers, see Lara R. Kusnetzky, “Stories of Tin City: Narrative Identity and the Histories of Gejiu, Yunnan Province” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2011), chap. 4.
 28. “Guanyu chuban ‘wenhua da geming’ tushu wenti de ruogan guiding” [Regulations governing the publication of books about the “Cultural Revolution”], December 10, 1988, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution database], ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong:

- Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010), CD-ROM. The English translation is slightly modified from Michael Schoenhals, ed., *China's Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 311–312.
29. Schoenhals, *China's Cultural Revolution*, 312.
 30. For several similar incidents, see He Qinglian, *Zhongguo zhengfu ruhe kongzhi meiti* [How the Chinese government controls the media] (New York: Human Rights in China, 2004), 109–111.
 31. Radio Free Asia, http://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/china_freedom_speech_movie-20070402.html, accessed October 19, 2012. For the Chinese government's censorship of public discussions about the Cultural Revolution and various popular attempts to evade official restrictions, see Guobin Yang, "A Portrait of Martyr Jiang Qing": The Chinese Cultural Revolution on the Internet," in *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China*, ed. Ching Kwan Lee and Guobin Yang (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 287–316.
 32. Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982), 277.
 33. See, for examples, Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner, "Politics, Scholarship, and Chinese Socialism," in *Marxism and the Chinese Experience: Issues in Contemporary Chinese Socialism*, ed. Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), 1–26; and Gao, *Battle for China's Past*, chap. 1.
 34. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 294–295. For a similar view, see also Gao, *Battle for China's Past*.
 35. Arif Dirlik, "The Predicament of Marxist Revolutionary Consciousness: Mao Zedong, Antonio Gramsci, and the Reformulation of Marxist Revolutionary Theory," *Modern China* 9, no. 2 (1983): 188.
 36. Dirlik, *Marxism in the Chinese Revolution*, 156.
 37. Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 10.
 38. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1984), 121.
 39. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), vii.
 40. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 123.
 41. Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 145.
 42. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 423.

2. Enemies from the Past

1. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 1, *Contradictions among the People, 1956–1957* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 1–2.

2. Franz Schurmann, “The Attack of the Cultural Revolution on Ideology and Organization,” in *China in Crisis*, ed. Ping-ti Ho and Tang Tsou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 525–526.
3. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1893–1949* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1893–1949] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2004), 2:834–835.
4. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 185; italics in the original.
5. For important discussions of Mao’s theory of continuous revolution, see John B. Starr, “Conceptual Foundations of Mao Tse-Tung’s Theory of Continuous Revolution,” *Asian Survey* 11, no. 6 (1971): 610–628; Graham Young and Dennis Woodward, “From Contradictions among the People to Class Struggle: The Theories of Uninterrupted Revolution and Continuous Revolution,” *Asian Survey* 18, no. 9 (1978): 912–933; and Stuart Schram, “Mao Tse-Tung and the Theory of the Permanent Revolution, 1958–69,” *China Quarterly*, no. 46 (1971): 221–244. For the Sino-Soviet split, see Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
6. André Malraux, *Anti-memoirs*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 386–387.
7. Simon Leys, *The Chairman’s New Clothes: Mao and the Cultural Revolution*, trans. Carol Appleyard and Patrick Goode, rev. ed. (London: Allison and Busby, 1981), 38.
8. For an exhaustive account of high-level leadership conflicts over social and economic policies in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution, see Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 3, *The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961–1966* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
9. Mao Zedong, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong’s manuscripts since the founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996) (hereafter MZDWG), 12:220.
10. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 1:3.
11. Quoted in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 283.
12. Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. Marshall Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178.
13. For the notion of revolutionary deradicalization, see Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York: Norton, 1968), 172–214. Michels issued the ominous warning that revolutions might result in the rise of a dominant “political class” and a “dictatorship in the hands of those leaders who have been sufficiently astute and sufficiently powerful to grasp the scepter of dominion in the name of socialism. . . . Thus the social revolution would not effect any real modification of the internal structure of the mass. The socialists might conquer, but not socialism, which would perish in the moment of its adherents’ triumph.” Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (New York: Free Press, 1962), 348, 354–355.

14. For the importance of the military in the new party-state, see David Shambaugh, “Building the Party-State in China, 1949–1965: Bringing the Soldier Back In,” in *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China*, ed. Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 125–150.
15. The centralized model of the Leninist party was in fact indebted to the direct influence of the Soviet Union as much as—ironically—it was to the KMT, the CCP’s political twin and longtime adversary, which itself was the product of both Soviet and German advisers. It is noteworthy that scholars working on the history of the PRC have stressed the substantial continuities between the Nationalist and Communist eras. For studies that trace the origins of key PRC institutions and practices to the earlier Republican era, see William C. Kirby, “Continuity and Change in Modern China: Economic Planning on the Mainland and on Taiwan, 1943–1958,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 24 (1990): 121–141; Julia Strauss, “Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949–1956,” *China Quarterly*, no. 188 (2006): 891–912; Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); and Mark W. Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace: State, Revolution, and Labor Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For China’s adoption of the Stalinist model in the early Mao era, see Hua-yu Li, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948–1953* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).
16. Ezra F. Vogel, “From Revolutionary to Semi-bureaucrat: The ‘Regularization’ of Cadres,” *China Quarterly*, no. 29 (1967): 36–37.
17. *Ibid.*, 40; Ying-mao Kau, “Patterns of Recruitment and Mobility of Urban Cadres,” in *The City in Communist China*, ed. John Wilson Lewis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971), 106.
18. This figure is based on data from Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 208–209.
19. Lowell Dittmer, *China’s Continuous Revolution: The Post-liberation Epoch, 1949–1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 60.
20. For an early criticism of incipient cadre privileges during the Yan’an era by the Communist intellectual Wang Shiwei, who was later accused of being an antiparty Trotskyist and secretly executed, see Dai Qing, *Wang Shiwei and “Wild Lilies”:* *Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942–1944*, trans. Nancy Liu and Lawrence R. Sullivan (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).
21. The supply system (*gongjizhi*) was often portrayed (either romanticized or denigrated) as the epitome of Communist egalitarianism. Mao, who repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the growing inequalities in post-1949 China, often made favorable remarks about the supply system. China scholars, however, have shown that significant inequalities existed in the supply system of the Yan’an years. See Yang Kuisong, “Cong gongjizhi dao zhiwu dengji gongjizhi: Xinzhongguo jianguo qianhou dangzheng renyuan shouru fenpei zhidu de

- yanbian” [From free supply system to rank-differentiated wage hierarchy: Changes in the income-distribution system for party and government officials before and after the founding of the PRC], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical research], no. 4 (2007): 112–124.
22. *Ibid.*, 128, 132–133; Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China*, 195, 199. Christopher Howe reported that in the early 1960s there were some reductions in the top bureaucrats’ salaries that brought the highest salary down to less than twenty times the lowest. Christopher Howe, *Wage Patterns and Wage Policy in Modern China, 1919–1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 40–41.
 23. Dittmer, *China’s Continuous Revolution*, 60.
 24. Yang Kuisong, “Cong gongjizhi dao zhiwu dengji gongzizhi,” 135–136. Evidently, the scheme of grades referred to here was locally modified.
 25. Mi Hedu, *Hongweibing zhe yidai* [The Red Guard generation] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1993), 132. It is notable that Xi Jinping, the current general secretary of the CCP and president of the PRC, was a graduate of the August 1 School. Often celebrated as the “cradle of leaders” (*lingxiu yaolan*), the school came under heavy criticism by the rebel Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.
 26. Yang Kuisong, “Guanyu jianguo yilai dangzheng ganbu shouru de wenda” [Questions and answers about the income of party and state officials after the founding of the PRC], *Nanfang zhoumo* [Southern weekend], August 30, 2007.
 27. Ge Yang made this remark in an interview in the documentary *The Gate of the Heavenly Peace* (1995), directed by Carma Hinton. “Fish cannot live out of water” was a political proverb frequently used during the Mao era to refer to the close relationship between the CCP and its popular mass base.
 28. For studies of China’s work-unit socialism, see Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Lü and Perry, *Danwei*.
 29. See Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1938–1965)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1992), 190–196, 200–238, 250–254. Shortly after the close of the Mao era, Deng complained that these illnesses were only worsening and “have reached intolerable dimensions.” Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982), 310.
 30. Richard Kraus, “The Chinese State and Its Bureaucrats,” in *State and Society in Contemporary China*, ed. Victor Nee and David Mozingo (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 140.
 31. For political campaigns implemented in the early years of the PRC to address the problems of the bureaucracy, see Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy, 1949–1976* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981), chaps. 2 and 3. The precursor of the Cultural Revolution, the Socialist Education or Four Cleanups Campaign (1963–1966), was a protracted effort to rein in misconduct among local party cadres. Originally intended as a way to combat abuses of power among rural cadres by mobilizing the peasants, the movement quickly turned to attacking former landlords and rich peasants,

- who purportedly were the source of cadre degeneration. For the Socialist Education Campaign, see Richard Baum, *Prelude to Revolution: Mao, the Party, and the Peasant Question, 1962–66* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); and Roderick MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 3, chap. 15.
32. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 5 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 374. Mátyás Rákosi was the Stalinist Hungarian leader who stepped down in 1956 under popular pressure.
 33. *Xinhua banyuekan* [Xinhua biweekly], no. 20 (September 1956): 154.
 34. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, 5:344–345.
 35. *MZDWG*, 6:403–405.
 36. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 1:173.
 37. For the text of Mao’s speech, see Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, 5:384–421.
 38. Roderick MacFarquhar, ed., *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Praeger, 1960), ix.
 39. For the 1957 episode, see MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 1:169–249; and Shen Zhihua, *Sikao yu xuanze: Cong zhishi fenzi huiyi dao fanyoupai yundong, 1956–1957* [Reflection and choice: From the Party Conference on Intellectuals to the Anti-Rightist Campaign, 1956–1957] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2008), chaps. 6–9.
 40. See *Renmin ribao* [People’s daily] (hereafter *RMRB*), July 20, 1957. Liu was later denounced as a rightist.
 41. Zhou Dajue, “Lun ‘jieji’ de fazhan” [On the development of “classes”], in *Yuan shang cao: Jiyi zhong de fanyou yundong* [Grass on the plains: The Anti-Rightist Campaign remembered], ed. Niu Han and Deng Jiuping (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 1998), 166–171.
 42. Lin Xiling, “Zai Beida de diyici fayan” [The First Speech given at Beijing University], in Niu Han and Deng Jiuping, eds., *Yuan shang cao*, 153–154. Lin was later condemned as a rightist and spent the next fifteen years in prison. For an English-language translation of selected critical views voiced during the Hundred Flowers movement, see MacFarquhar, *Hundred Flowers Campaign*.
 43. Quoted in Ding Shu, *Yang mou: Fanyoupai yundong shimo* [Open conspiracy: A history of the Anti-Rightist Campaign], 2006 rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Kaifang zaizhishe, 2006), 172.
 44. *Ibid.*, 162.
 45. *RMRB*, June 8, 1957; *MZDWG*, 6:496–497.
 46. The official history disclosed that over half a million were branded rightists. However, independent scholarship estimates that approximately 1,200,000 were labeled rightists, and over 600,000 were labeled “antisocialist element” or “antiparty element.” Ding Shu, *Yang mou*, 20, 265.
 47. According to statistics collected in twenty-three provinces, 8,070,000 (including 4,330,000 party members and 3,740,000 “nonparty masses”) were denounced and punished for various political and ideological offenses in the political campaigns during the late 1950s and early 1960s. See Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* [Recollections of certain critical

- decisions and events], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1993), 1000–1001.
48. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 1:280.
 49. Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-Ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 64.
 50. Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 143.
 51. See Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957); and Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972).
 52. Richard Kraus, "Class Conflict and the Vocabulary of Social Analysis in China," *China Quarterly*, no. 69 (1977): 63.
 53. Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978–1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 49–51.
 54. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 306.
 55. John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, enl. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 384.
 56. Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 2, 326.
 57. Harding, *Organizing China*, 263.
 58. Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 333.
 59. MacFarquhar, *Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, 1:199.
 60. *Ibid.*, 1:214.
 61. Graham Young, "Mao Zedong and the Class Struggle in Socialist Society," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 16 (1986): 41–80.
 62. *Ibid.*, 62.
 63. Martin K. Whyte, "Inequality and Stratification in the People's Republic of China," *China Quarterly*, no. 64 (1975): 695.
 64. For Chinese political discussions on "bourgeois right" in the mid-1970s, see Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 400–401.
 65. James T. Myers, Jürgen Domes, and Erik von Groeling, eds., *Chinese Politics: Documents and Analysis*, vol. 1 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 274.
 66. In his important study of Red Guard politics in Beijing, Joel Andreas argued that these new bourgeois elements, or the target of the Cultural Revolution, represented the "convergence between a new political elite, most of whom were peasant revolutionaries, and an old educated elite, composed largely of members of the former propertied classes." According to this view, the Cultural Revolution may be understood as "an assault on both the old intellectual elite and the new political elite, [which] ultimately served as a catalyst that facilitated the merger of these elites, laying the foundation for a new dominant class in China." Andreas is perhaps one of the few China scholars who have accurately and systematically comprehended the essential thrust of the late Maoist doctrine of class, which many others have failed to grasp fully. See Joel Andreas, "Battling over Political and Cultural Power during the Chinese

- Cultural Revolution,” *Theory and Society* 31, no. 4 (2002): 465; and Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), introduction.
67. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long live Mao Zedong Thought] (Wuhan, 1968) (hereafter *Wansui*), 4:31–32. At the outset of the Cultural Revolution, Mao again highlighted the role of prerevolutionary elites in the degeneration of the revolution: “We have inherited the national bourgeoisie and their intellectuals, as well as sons and daughters of the landlord class. . . . Some of these former people [*jiu ren*] have wormed into the party. They remain concealed until opportunities become ripe, which they then seize.” “Zai huijian A Er Ba Ni Ya lingdao-ren Xiehu shi de tanhua (jijiao)” [Abridgement of Mao Zedong’s conversation with Albanian leader Shehu], May 5, 1966, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution database] (hereafter *CRDB*), ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010).
 68. *MZDWG*, 11:265–266.
 69. Myers, Domes, and Groeling, *Chinese Politics*, 1:271.
 70. For accounts of the CCP-led peasant movement, see William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); David Crook and Isabel Crook, *Revolution in a Chinese Village: Ten Mile Inn* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959); and Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).
 71. The categories and procedure of classification were specified in “Zhengwuyuan guanyu huafen nongcun jieji de jue ding” [The State Council’s decision concerning the classification of class statuses in the countryside] (August 1950), in *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* [Selected important documents since the founding of the PRC], ed. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, 20 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992–1998) (hereafter *ZYWXXB*), 1:382–407. For analyses of rural class classification during the PRC’s early years, see Philip C. C. Huang, “Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution—Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution,” *Modern China* 21, no. 1 (1995): 105–143; Xiaojun Zhang, “Land Reform in Yang Village: Symbolic Capital and the Determination of Class Status,” *Modern China* 30, no. 1 (2004): 3–45.
 72. *Ibid.*, 1:290.
 73. For example, the “rightist” category was applied to those who transgressed political boundaries in 1957. Scholars have counted over forty political campaigns during the Mao era. See Shiping Zheng, *Party vs. State in Post-1949 China: The Institutional Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 270–271.
 74. During the 1950s, the urban bourgeoisie were initially treated more leniently, except for those labeled “bureaucratic capitalists” or “comprador capitalists” and marked out as class enemies. The rest were reluctantly granted membership in “the people” as the new regime sought the collaboration of the managerial and technical elites in its effort to revive a national economy wrecked by decades of war. As the economy improved and the political situation stabilized,

- the party's class policy increasingly hardened, and former capitalists and their family members were subjected to growing discrimination and stigmatization. For a study of the treatment of the urban capitalists in the 1950s, see Christopher R. Leighton, "Capitalists, Cadres, and Culture in 1950s China" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2010).
75. James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.
 76. Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Center, Australian National University, 1976), 9.
 77. ZYWXXB, 1:406–407.
 78. Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1938–1965)*, 228–229.
 79. "Letter to Huang Yanpei" (1956), in MZDWG, 6:255; italics in the original.
 80. For social deviancies in the late 1950s and early 1960s, see Gao Wangling, *Renmin gongshe shiqi Zhongguo nongmin "fanxingwei" diaocha* [An investigation into peasant resistance during the era of the People's Commune] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2006); and Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (New York: Walker and Company, 2010), 191–229.
 81. For the rise of China's household registration system, see Tiejun Chen and Mark Selden, "The Origins and Social Consequences of China's Hukou System," *China Quarterly*, no. 139 (1994): 644–668.
 82. Klaus Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 214.
 83. Shanghai Municipal Archives [hereafter SMA], B243-1-319 (1964). The report was marked "extremely confidential" (*juemi*).
 84. SMA, B40-2-2 (July 1958). For fear of being accused of being lax in implementing the party's class policy, local officials often imposed even more stringent restrictions. A secret memo produced in Shanghai in 1964, for example, stipulated that "while the Party Center has provided clear and precise rules about political background checks, for those ambiguous cases that may be decided in either direction [*keshang kexia*] we generally adopt a stricter interpretation [*congyan zhangwo*]." Although the central policy stipulated that those of less stigmatized class origins (such as petty bourgeoisie) should not be treated as harshly, the Shanghai municipal government disqualified children of petty merchants, peddlers, or even Christians in order to assure the "purity" (*chunjie*) of the university student body. SMA, B243-1-319 (1964).
 85. Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian bianjibu, *Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian: 1949–1981* [Yearbook of Chinese education: 1949–1981] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaikequanshu chubanshe, 1984), 338–339.
 86. Li Guojun and Wang Bingzhao, eds., *Zhongguo jiaoyu zhidu tongshi* [A comprehensive history of educational institutions in China] (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), 8:360.
 87. Shaoguang Wang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995), 51–52. In 1949, Wuhan had a population of about 1 million, which grew to 2.5 million in 1966.

88. For instance, Mao noted at the height of the Cultural Revolution that “landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and bad elements” constituted as much as 5 percent of the Chinese population. Mao, “He Kabo, Baluku tongzhi de tanhua” [Conversation with Comrades Hynsi Kapo and Beqir Baluku], February 3, 1967, in *Wansui*, 4:289. Two earlier examples can be found in “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chedi suqing ancang de fan’gemin fenzi de zhishi” [The CCP Party Center’s instruction regarding the thorough elimination of hidden counterrevolutionaries], August 25, 1955, in *ZYWXXB*, 7:138; and “Zai kuoda de zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua” [Speech at the enlarged party work conference], January 30, 1962, *ibid.*, 10:26–27. According to the reminiscence of Bo Yibo, who was then vice premier, Mao estimated during the Four Cleanups Campaign in 1963 that as much as 10 percent of the population might be subject to “class struggle,” and only upon the objection of Premier Zhou Enlai did he lower the number to 5 percent. Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu*, 2:1109–1110.
89. For official distinctions between class status and origin in the case of offspring, see *ZYWXXB*, 1:406.
90. Marriage choice was often complicated by the fact that class labels were inherited patrilineally; therefore, male status prevailed over female status. More secure in his positive status, a male worker might marry the daughter of a former capitalist or landlord, sometimes without substantial negative consequences. The political future of a woman, on the other hand, depended mainly on her husband’s status. Female offspring of bad class elements might therefore escape the fate of a bad status through marrying upward. On the other hand, a young woman with a red family background might ruin a bright political future by marrying downward. For inter- and intraclass marriage patterns, see Elizabeth Croll, “Marriage Choice and Status Group in Contemporary China,” in *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, ed. James L. Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 175–197; and Weiguo Zhang, “Class Categories and Marriage Patterns in Rural China in the Mao Era,” *Modern China* 39, no. 4 (2013): 438–471.
91. Quoted in Jonathan Unger, “The Class System in Rural China,” in Watson, *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, 125–126.
92. For an account of class reappraisal in a North China village during the mid-1960s, see William Hinton, *Shenfan: The Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 357–360.
93. In this system, the color red (“red sun,” “red blood,” “red category,” and so on), which in traditional Chinese color symbolism connotes life, prosperity, and good fortune, is associated with revolution, moral and ideological purity, loyalty, and so on, whereas the opposite color black (“black category,” “black flag,” “black wind,” “black gang,” and “black devil”) symbolizes death and evil. For an analysis of political symbolism prevalent in Mao’s China, see Dittmer, *China’s Continuous Revolution*, 81–90.
94. Stuart Schram, “Classes, Old and New, in Mao Zedong’s Thought,” in Watson, *Class and Social Stratification in Post-revolution China*, 52.

95. Other supernatural and animalistic terms included “devils,” “ghosts,” “vampires,” “tigers,” “jackals,” and “scorpions.” For the use of demonizing symbolism in Mao’s China, see Barend J. ter Haar, “China’s Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm,” in *China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counternarratives*, ed. Woei Lien Chong (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 27–62; and Michael Schoenhals, “Demonizing Discourse in Mao Zedong’s China: People vs Non-people,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, nos. 3–4 (2007): 465–482.
96. See ZYWXXB, 19:326.
97. *Jiefang ribao* [Liberation daily], August 23, 1966, quoted in Dittmer, *China’s Continuous Revolution*, 83.
98. For the Gang of Four affair in the early post-Mao years, see Alexander C. Cook, *China’s Cultural Revolution on Trial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
99. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 84.
100. Andrew Walder, *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 171.

3. From the Good Blood to the Right to Rebel

1. For details of the case, see Wang Youqin, *Wenge shounanzhe* [Victims of the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Kaifang chubanshe, 2004), 218–229. For rumors surrounding the case, see Song Bolin, *Hongweibing Xingshuailu: Tsinghua Fuzhong lao hongweibing shouji* [Rise and fall of the Red Guards: Diary of an Old Red Guard of Tsinghua University Attached Middle School] (Hong Kong: Desai chuban youxian gongsi, 2006), 125.
2. Official acquiescence was best expressed by Xie Fuzhi, the minister of public security, in a speech to police chiefs in late August: “We can’t do things according to normal practice, and we can’t follow [existing] statutes. If you arrest those who beat people, you will make mistakes. . . . Should the Red Guards who kill people be punished? My view is that if people are killed, then they are killed; this is not our business. . . . I do not approve of the masses killing people, but if they hate the bad people so much, then let us not try to do the impossible and insist on [stopping them].” Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Wenhua dage-ming shi nian shi* [A history of the Cultural Revolution decade] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe 1986), 67.
3. For accounts of rural violence near Beijing, see Yu Luowen, “Beijing Daxing xian can’an diaocha” [Investigation of the tragic incident in Daxing County, Beijing], in *Wenge datusha* [Massacres in the Cultural Revolution], ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Kaifang zazhishe, 2002), 13–36; and Sun Yancheng, “Xuetong lun he Daxing ‘ba san yi’ shijian” [The bloodline theory and the August 31 Incident in Daxing County], *Yanhuang chunqiu* [China through the ages], no. 12 (2012): 32–37.

4. Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 77.
5. Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 126.
6. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 317.
7. Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 77.
8. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 317.
9. Joel Andreas, "Battling over Political and Cultural Power during the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *Theory and Society* 31, no. 4 (2002): 464.
10. Shoudu bayi xuexiao Mao Zedong sixiang geming zaofan zongbu, *Chun lei* [Spring thunder], no. 12 (August 1967), in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *A New Collection of Red Guard Publications, Part 2: A Special Compilation of Newspapers in Beijing Area*, ed. Song Yongyi (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2001) (hereafter CCRM [2001]), 5:1796; *Chun lei*, no. 4 (April 13, 1967), *ibid.*, 5:1758.
11. *Chun lei*, supplementary issue, n.d., in CCRM (2001), 5:1781.
12. These included special coaching, extra points for examinations, guaranteed Communist Youth League membership, among others. See Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 334; Stanley Rosen, *Red Guard Factionalism and the Cultural Revolution in Guangzhou* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), 76–81.
13. Communist Youth League publications discussed extensively how young people from exploiting-class families must break away from their bourgeois parents. See James Townsend, *The Revolutionization of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-Nien* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), pt. 3.
14. Ye Weili and Ma Xiaodong, *Growing Up in the People's Republic: Conversations between Two Daughters of China's Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 58–59; italics in the original.
15. *Ibid.*, 54.
16. In 1949, according to municipal police records, only 5.4 percent of the city's total population was classified as working in "industrial and mining enterprises" (*gongkuang qiye*). Beijingshi Gong'anju Hujichu, ed., *Beijingshi sishi nian hukou tongji ziliao huibian (1949–1988)* [Collection of four decades of hukou statistical data in Beijing (1949–1988)] (Beijing, 1989), 1:345–346.
17. The first such group was formed at the Tsinghua University Attached Middle School in late May 1966 and was named the "Red Guard" (*Hong Wei Bing*). For an eyewitness account of the birth of the Red Guards, see Bu Weihua, "Tsinghua Fuzhong hongweibing chengli shimo" [The birth of the Tsinghua University Attached Middle School Red Guards], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [CCP party history research materials] 70 (1999): 96–107.
18. For the work-team episode in the early months of the Cultural Revolution, see Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, chap. 2; Roderick MacFarquhar

- and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), chap. 4; and Andrew Walder, *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), chaps. 2 and 5.
19. See Walder, *Fractured Rebellion*, 130–133; and Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 93–95.
 20. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949–1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2003) (hereafter *MZDZ, 1949–1976*), 2:1423.
 21. Tsinghua daxue fuzhong hongweibing, “Wuchan jieji de jieji luxian wansui” [Long live the proletarian class line], August 1966, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database], ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010) (hereafter *CRDB*).
 22. Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, eds., *Wenhua dageming he tade yiduan sichao* [Heterodox currents of thought in the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1997) (hereafter Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*), 83.
 23. Mi Hedu, ed., *Huiyi yu fansi: Hongweibing shidai fengyun renwu koushulishi* [Reminiscence and reflection: Oral histories of luminary figures in the Red Guard era] (Hong Kong: Zhongguo shuju, 2011), 2:158.
 24. A couplet or *duilian* is a traditional Chinese literary device composed of a pair of lines of poetry that have a one-to-one correspondence in their metrical length and are often grammatically parallel. They are usually seen flanking the doorways to people's homes or as hanging scrolls in interior spaces. A couplet typically includes a horizontal banner (*hengpi*), which summarizes or comments on the general topic of the associated pair.
 25. Shoudu dazhuanyuanxiao hongweibing silingbu, “Geming duilian xuan” [Selections of revolutionary couplets], handbill, September 23, 1966, AC. I thank Chen Guokang for sharing this valuable document.
 26. Mi Hedu, *Hongweibing zhe yidai* [The Red Guard generation] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1993), 133.
 27. *Ibid.*, 140.
 28. For example, at the Tsinghua University Attached Middle School, where the first Red Guard group was born, the number was less than 300 in a school of more than 1,500 students. Wang Youqin, “Student Attacks against Teachers—The Revolution of 1966,” *Issues and Studies* 37, no. 2 (2001): 70.
 29. *Ibid.*, 57–58.
 30. In Guangzhou, for example, cadres' children demanded that working-class students prove their proletarian origins. In what was known as the campaign of “investigating three generations” (*cha sandai*), many working-class students suddenly found their proletarian purity at risk because their parents or even grandparents, who had been coolies or artisans, were considered not proletarian enough. Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, “Students and Class Warfare: The Social Roots of the Red Guard Conflict in Guangzhou (Canton),” *China Quarterly*, no. 83 (1980): 428.

31. *Zhongxue wenge bao* [Journal of middle-school cultural revolution], February 21, 1967, in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *A New Collection of Red Guard Publications, Part 1: Newspapers*, ed. Zhou Yuan (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1999) (hereafter CCRM [1999]), 17:8367.
32. Shoudu zhongxue hongweibing silingbu, *Dongfeng bao* [The east wind bulletin], no. 3 (January 26, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 11:4004; Zhongxuesheng Hongweibing Shoudu Fenglei Xuanchuanbu, *Shoudu fenglei* [Capital city storm and thunder], February 26, 1967, in CCRM (2001), 29:11114.
33. “Zhi quanshi jinji huyushu” [Urgent appeal to the whole city], Capital City Bethune Blood Station (originally Beijing Municipal Blood Station), August 25, 1966, in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *Red Guard Publications* (Washington, DC: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1975), 19:6091.
34. Dangdai Zhongguo congshu bianjibu, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing* [Beijing in contemporary China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), 1:166–170.
35. Jin Chongji, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* [Biography of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 4:1858.
36. *Ibid.*, 4:1860–1861. Evidently, “Number One” (*yi hao*) and “Number Two” (*er hao*) would be reserved for Mao and Lin Biao. Zhou’s first name, Enlai, which in Chinese meant “to bring forth grace,” would smack too much of feudal influence in the political atmosphere typical of the Cultural Revolution.
37. Mao Zedong zhuyi xuexiao hongweibing, “Pojiu lixin yibaili” [One hundred items for destroying the old and erecting the new], August 1966, in *CRDB*. For an English translation, see Michael Schoenhals, ed., *China’s Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 212–222.
38. Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 88.
39. “Beijingshi ‘wenhua dageming’ dashiji, 1965–1967” [A chronicle of events of the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” in Beijing, 1965–1967], in Zhonggong Beijing shiwei dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, *Beijing dangshi ziliao tongxun* [Bulletin of party history in Beijing], supplementary issue, no. 17 (1987), 24. I thank Michael Schoenhals for kindly sharing this source. Nationwide, as many as 400,000 “monsters and freaks” were deported from the cities. “Qingkan hongweibing de huihuang zhan’guo he juda gongji” [Behold the Red Guards’ glorious victories and great achievements], October 3, 1966, in *CRDB*. In March 1967, the Beijing municipal police reaffirmed the forced repatriation policy, decreeing that deportees who had returned to the city must be “immediately sent back to wherever they had been repatriated to.” See “Zhongguo renming jiefangjun Beijingshi gong’anju junshi guan zhi weiyuanhui dui ‘guanyu zai wenhua dageming zhong bei qiansong hou fanjing renyuan de chuli banfa’ zhong ruogan tiaowen de lijie de yixie yijian” [Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau PLA Military Control Commission’s interpretation of the “Instructions Regarding Disposition of Returned Repatriates”], March 27, 1967, in *CRDB*.
40. *MZDZ*, 1949–1976, 2:1437–1438.

41. Mao Zedong, “Zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua” [Talk at the Party Center’s Work Conference], August 23, 1966, in Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long live Mao Zedong Thought] (Wuhan, 1968), 4:269.
42. *MZDZ, 1949–1976*, 2:1438.
43. *Renmin ribao* [People’s daily] (hereafter *RMRB*), August 23, 1966.
44. “Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu zhizhi yiqie dasiren xianxiang de jinji tongzhi” [The CCP Beijing Municipal Committee’s urgent notice with respect to suppressing the occurrence of fatal beatings], September 2, 1966, in *CRDB*.
45. Dangdai Zhongguo congshu bianjibu, *Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing*, 1:168.
46. Charles Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
47. Jin Zhong, ed., *Yu Luoke: Zhongguo renquan xianqu* [Yu Luoke: Pioneer of human rights in China] (Hong Kong: Kaifang chubanshe, 2010), 18. Wangfujing is Beijing’s busiest shopping area, and “burning books and burying the literati alive” apparently referred to the notorious story of burning books and killing literati by the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty (246–221 BC). Even some members of the early Red Guards had qualms about the violent campaign to attack the Four Olds. Bu Dahua, a member of the earliest Red Guard group at Tsinghua University Attached Middle School, recollected later: “Honestly, I had some problems with this. I was strongly against the Red Guards’ making rebellion in the society at large, doing things such as changing street or shop names and chopping off pointed shoes and cutting off the bell-bottoms of pants. I thought it would be difficult to know what the proper boundaries were.” In Mi Heduo, *Huiyi yu fansi*, 1:50.
48. Ya Yi, “Fang Mu Zhijing boshi” [Interview with Dr. Mu Zhijing], *Beijing zhichun* [Beijing spring], no. 6 (1996): 70.
49. Bei Dao, Cao Yifan, and Wei Yi, eds., *Baofengyu de jiyi: 1965–1970 nian de Beijing sizhong* [Remembering the Tempest: Beijing No. 4 Middle School from 1965 to 1970] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.
50. Mi Heduo, *Huiyi yu fansi*, 2:202–203.
51. *Ibid.*, 2:25.
52. *Ibid.*, 2:100.
53. Walder, *Fractured Rebellion*, 138.
54. Ya Yi, “Fang Mu Zhijing Boshi,” 70.
55. See Mu’s reminiscence in Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 7–8.
56. *RMRB*, September 15, 1966.
57. See, for examples, Gordon White, *The Politics of Class and Class Origin: The Case of the Cultural Revolution* (Canberra: Contemporary China Center, Australian National University, 1976), 34–36; and Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 72–75.
58. Vice Premier Tan once remarked that Red Guard organizations must recruit primarily from the “five red categories,” and students from middle peasant

and petty bourgeois families should be disqualified “for the moment.” “Tan Zhenlin zai jiejian Beijing nongye daxue gongzuozu shi de jianghua” [Tan Zhenlin’s speech at the meeting with the work team from Beijing Agricultural University], August 29, 1966, in *CRDB*.

59. Quoted in White, *Politics of Class and Class Origin*, 30–31.
60. “Jiang Qing, Zhu De, Kang Sheng zai Beijing daxue de jianghua” [Talks of Jiang Qing, Zhu De, and Kang Sheng at Beijing University], August 4, 1966, in *CRDB*.
61. “Chen Boda zai Beijing daxue de jianghua” [Chen Boda’s remarks at Beijing University], August 24, 1966, in *CRDB*.
62. “Guan Feng deng zai zhongyang wenge jiedaishi dui tongxue de guangbo jianghua” [Broadcast address to students by Guan Feng and others, delivered at the CCRG Reception Center], August 1, 1966, in *CRDB*.
63. “Jiang Qing, Kang Sheng, Wang Renzhong dui Beijing zhongxuesheng de jianghua” [Remarks of Jiang Qing, Wang Renzhong, and Kang Sheng to Beijing Middle School students], August 6, 1966, in *CRDB*. For Maoist leaders’ ambiguous stands regarding the bloodline theory, also see Walder, *Fractured Rebellion*, 138–139.
64. For the repudiation of the “bourgeois reactionary line,” see Wang Nianyi, *Dadongluan de niandai* [The era of great turmoil] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2006), 78–106; and Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, chap. 4.
65. The rifts within Beijing’s Red Guard movement were already evident in late August 1966, when several cross-school organizations were established to coordinate the city’s disorganized Red Guard movement. Drawing members mostly from cadre and military families, these groups took as their mission protecting “state secrets and personal safety of veteran revolutionary leaders” in the face of growing rebel attacks. See Walder, *Fractured Rebellion*, 150–153.
66. Mi Hedu, *Hongweibing zhe yidai*, 193. On August 18, 1966, Mao received over a million students at Tiananmen Square. This kicked off the turbulent Red Guard movement nationwide.
67. *Ibid.*, 188.
68. *Chun lei* [The spring thunder], no. 8 (June 10, 1967), in *CCRM* (2001), 5:1777. Founded in the fall of 1966, the Third Headquarters (colloquially known as the San Si) was one of the largest and most important rebel coalitions in Beijing. “7434” was homonymic to “piss off San Si.” For the Third Headquarters or San Si, see Lee, *Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, 98–99; and Walder, *Fractured Rebellion*, 157–160.
69. Mi Hedu, *Huiyi yu fansi*, 2:177.
70. *Shoudu fenglei*, no. 4 (February 28, 1967), in *CCRM* (2001), 29:11121.
71. Mi Hedu, *Hongweibing zhe yidai*, 292.
72. Mao’s father was a rich peasant who hired laborers and owned shares in rice shops, while Lin’s father owned a cloth factory.
73. *Zhongxue luntan* [Middle-school forum], no. 1 (February 27, 1967), in *CCRM* (2001), 40:15860.

74. *Shoudu fenglei*, no. 2 (February 7, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 29:11111; Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 230.
75. “Chen Boda zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua” [Chen Boda’s speech at the CCP Central Work Conference], October 16, 1966, in CRDB. Chen’s remark was specifically directed at a widely circulated slogan among Beijing’s Old Red Guards that “children of high-ranking cadres must hold power.”
76. “Jiang Qing jiejian Beijing zhongxue daibiao tan jieji luxian” [Jiang Qing on the “class line” at the meeting with Beijing middle-school student delegates], November 14, 1966, in CRDB.
77. Ibid.
78. “Chen Boda zai zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua.”
79. Yu’s father was denounced for criticizing the party’s common practice of cultivating and retaining political activists to inform secretly on coworkers. His mother’s offense was her expression of sympathy for Zhang Naiqi, a “big rightist” best known for his trenchant criticisms of the party. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia* [My family] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000), 25.
80. Ibid., 33.
81. Xu Xiao, Ding Dong, and Xu Youyu, eds., *Yu Luoke: Yizuo yu huiyi* [Yu Luoke: Writings and recollections] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1999), 294. Yu’s younger brother Luowen, who was in junior high school, also had a note inserted in his dossier that he “had failed to draw a clear line of demarcation from the rightist family.” Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 45.
82. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 34.
83. In Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luoke*, 18.
84. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 68–71.
85. Jin Zhong, *Yu Luoke*, 18.
86. Participated in by millions of students and young teachers, the Great Link-up or *chuanlian* movement was encouraged by Mao as a way to arouse the masses and spread the flames of the Cultural Revolution from the national political center to rest of the country. For a study of the impact of the *chuanlian* movement on Red Guard identity, see Guobin Yang, “The Liminal Effects of Social Movements: Red Guards and the Transformation of Identity,” *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 3 (2000): 379–406.
87. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 75.
88. For Mu’s recollection, see Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 13; see also Ya Yi, “Fang Mu Zhijing Boshi,” 68–75.
89. Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 13–14. All seven issues of the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* (including a special issue that reprinted “On Class Origins”) are collected in CCRM (1999), 17:8351–8380. A number of Yu Luoke’s writings that were initially published in the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* are collected in Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luoke*, 3–122. An English translation of “On Class Origins” can be found in *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 32, no. 4 (2001): 17–36, which I have consulted and modified.

90. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 82–83. According to Mu, the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution* was practically a “hard currency” in the black market, exchangeable for any other newspaper. Altogether, six issues were published before the paper was shut down in April 1967. All the issues were priced at two cents except issue 4, which was priced at three cents, and the total sales revenue was over 6,000 yuan. See Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 15, 19.
91. *Shoudu fenglei*, no. 3 (February 16, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 29:11112.
92. Bei Dao et al., *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 17–18.
93. *Ibid.*, 15–16.
94. *Ibid.*, 23, 287.
95. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luo*, 5.
96. Published in *Zhongxue luntan*, February 27, 1967, in CCRM (2001), 40:15858–15860.
97. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luo*, 19.
98. *Ibid.*, 68–69.
99. *Zhongxue wenge bao*, February 2, 1967, in CCRM (1999), 17:8358.
100. *Jiaogong zhanbao* [Educational workers’ combat bulletin], no. 2 (March 11, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 23:8953–8954.
101. *Dongfeng bao* [The eastern wind bulletin], no. 6 (March 6, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 11:4013.
102. See, for examples, *Shoudu fenglei*, no. 2 (February 7, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 29:11111; and *Zhi ba chun lai bao* [Harbinger of spring], no. 2 (March 12, 1967), *ibid.*, 40:15717–15719.
103. *Jiaogong zhanbao*, no. 2 (March 11, 1967), in CCRM (2001), 23:8953.
104. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luo*, 12. In 1964, Mao advocated the cultivation of “millions of revolutionary successors” and stressed that they had to be (1) real Marxist-Leninists, (2) revolutionaries, (3) proletarian politicians who could be one with the majority of the people, (4) models in practicing the party’s democratic centralism, and (5) modest and good at self-criticism. *RMRB*, July 4, 1964; see also Hong Yung Lee, *From Revolutionary Cadres to Party Technocrats in Socialist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 64. Both Lei Feng and Wang Jie were PLA soldiers posthumously portrayed as selflessly devoted to the Communist Party, Chairman Mao, and the Chinese people. They became the subjects of nationwide campaigns of model emulation in the mid-1960s. For hero-emulation campaigns in the Mao era, see Mary Sheridan, “The Emulation of Heroes,” *China Quarterly*, no. 33 (1968): 47–72.
105. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luo*, 6.
106. *Ibid.*, 7.
107. *Ibid.*, 10–11.
108. *Ibid.*, 7.
109. *Ibid.*, 74.
110. *Ibid.*, 73.
111. *Ibid.*, 75.

112. *Ibid.*, 7.
113. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 307; see also Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), chap. 3.
114. Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, 107.
115. *Ibid.*, 89.
116. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luoke*, 12.
117. *Ibid.*, 75.
118. *Ibid.*, 3.
119. *Ibid.*, 83–84.
120. *Ibid.*, 38–39.
121. *Ibid.*, 40.
122. Andreas, “Battling over Political and Cultural Power,” 481–483.
123. Ernesto Laclau, “Populism: What’s in a Name?,” in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (London: Verso, 2005), 36.
124. Chen Kuide, “Zhongguo ziyou zhuyi zai wenge zhong de mengya” [The sprouts of Chinese liberalism in the Cultural Revolution], in *Wenhua dageming: Lishi zhenxiang he jiti huiyi* [The Cultural Revolution: Historical truth and collective memory], ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 2007), 1:430.
125. For the notions of “nodal point” and “articulation,” see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), chap. 3.
126. Xu Xiao et al., *Yu Luoke*, 20.
127. *Ibid.*, 21–22.
128. Sherry B. Ortner, “On Key Symbols,” *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 5 (1973): 1339–1440; Ernesto Laclau, “Constructing Universality,” in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 302–305.
129. “Qi Benyu, Zhang Chunqiao, Xie Fuzhi jiejian Beijing zhongxue daibiao shi de jianghua” [Speeches of Qi Benyu, Zhang Chunqiao, and Xie Fuzhi during their meeting with representatives of Beijing Middle School students], April 13, 1967, in *CRDB*.
130. Bei Dao, *Baofengyu de jiyi*, 18–19.
131. Quoted in Jin Zhong, *Yu Luoke*, 47.
132. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 123–124.
133. Jin Zhong, *Yu Luoke*, 47.
134. Yu Luowen, *Wo jia*, 122, 124–128; Jin Zhong, *Yu Luoke*, 14.
135. Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun Beijingshi junshi guan zhi weiyuanhui, “Tongzhi” [Circular], handbill, January 9, 1970, AC. I thank Jin Song for sharing this document.
136. The circumstances surrounding Yu Luoke’s death sentence are far from clear as official archives relating to the case remain closed. According to one account, Yu was originally sentenced to death within weeks of his arrest, but the sentence was delayed while the police attempted to extract more information regarding his purported counterrevolutionary organization. In addition

to charges such as “disseminating counterrevolutionary views” and “producing counterrevolutionary letters, poems, and diary,” the verdict also included the insidious charge that Yu “attempted to conduct assassination activities.” This alluded to the nebulous allegation that his younger brother Luowen had once possessed a hand grenade (during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, weapons and ammunition were often readily accessible). Police investigation of Luoke after his arrest first focused on his activities relating to the publication of the *Journal of Middle-School Cultural Revolution*, but it quickly shifted to his connection with the hand-grenade case. For an analysis of Yu’s death sentence, see Wang Rui, “Shi shui qianshu le chujue Yu Luoke de mingling” [Who signed Yu Luoke’s execution order?], in Jin Zhong, *Yu Luoke*, 54–72.

137. Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, 116.

138. *Ibid.*, 115.

139. For Jiang Qing’s speech, see “Jiang Qing zai junwei kuoda huiyi shang de jianghua” [The speech by Jiang Qing at the enlarged meeting of the Central Military Committee,” April 12, 1967, in *CRDB*.

140. For the April 3 faction, see Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 241–247; for the text of “On the New Trends of Thought,” see *ibid.*, 248–256.

4. Revolutionary Alchemy

1. Guo Jian, Song Yongyi, and Zhou Yuan, *Historical Dictionary of the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 122–123.
2. Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*, trans. D. W. Y. Kwok (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 124.
3. Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 140.
4. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 155.
5. Harry Harding, “The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–1969,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, *The People’s Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution, 1966–1982*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 159–160. It is noteworthy that this view has also been widely accepted by scholars outside the China field. For example, “The entrance onto the scene of the workers,” as French philosopher Alain Badiou characterized the Shanghai events, “marks both and at the same time a spectacular broadening of the revolutionary mass base, a gigantic and sometimes violent putting to the test of bureaucratized forms of power, and the short-lived outline of a new articulation between the popular political initiative and the power of the state.” Alain Badiou, “The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 13, no. 3 (2005): 497. Slavoj Žižek portrayed the January Revolution in a similar way: “One million workers . . . took the official slogans [of revolution] seriously, demanding the abolition of the state and even the party itself, and the direct communal organization of society.” Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2008), 206.

6. For early articulations of this interpretation, see Neale Hunter, *Shanghai Journal: An Eyewitness Account of the Cultural Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969); and Andrew Walder, *Chang Ch'un-Ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution*, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, vol. 32 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1978).
7. For the circumstances surrounding the formation of the WGHQ, see Li Xun, *Da bengkui: Shanghai gongren zaofanpai xingwangshi* [The great debacle: The rise and fall of Shanghai's worker rebels] (Taipei: Shibao chubanshe, 1996), chap. 3; Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 32–34; and Hunter, *Shanghai Journal*, 138–144.
8. Michael Schoenhals, ed., *China's Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe), 39, 41–42.
9. *Renmin ribao* [People's daily] (hereafter RMRB), November 10, 1966.
10. For Lenin's critique of economism, see Vladimir Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?" and Other Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1987), 53–176.
11. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 329. For similar views, see William Hinton, *Turning Point in China: An Essay on the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 66; Victor Nee, "Revolution and Bureaucracy: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution," in *China's Uninterrupted Revolution*, ed. Victor Nee and James Peck (New York: Pantheon, 1975), 331–332; Jean Daubier, *A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Random House, 1974), 124–128; and Jiang Hongsheng, "The Paris Commune in Shanghai: The Masses, the State, and Dynamics of Continuous Revolution" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2010), 265–284.
12. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 97–118; Walder, *Chang Ch'un-Ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution*, 39–50; Lynn T. White, "Workers' Politics in Shanghai," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (1976): 99–116; Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 271–307.
13. In November, Chen Pixian, Shanghai's party boss, urged his subordinates to show flexibility and not to "obstruct and antagonize the masses." "You should not be too strict with the masses' economic demands. Do not go against the wishes of the masses." Another municipal official was quoted as saying: "My concern is how to establish good relationships with them [the workers]. We should be as generous as possible." *Shanghaishi geming weiyuanhui fandui jingji zhuyi lianluo zongbu, Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming zhong Shanghaishi fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji* [Chronicle of antieconomistic activities in Shanghai during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution] (Shanghai, March 1967).
14. Shanghai tongjiju, *Shanghai tongji nianjian: 1983* [Statistical yearbook of Shanghai: 1983] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), 329.
15. *Ibid.*, 80, 136.

16. Militarization of the workforce was a salient feature of China's social and political organization during the late 1950s. Nationally, the People's Militia (*minbing*) boasted approximately 220 million members, organized by both workplace and neighborhoods. By 1959, Shanghai's militia had grown to over 2.5 million. See Elizabeth J. Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 184–192.
17. Jackie Sheehan, *Chinese Workers: A New History* (London: Routledge, 1998), chap. 1.
18. Shanghai Municipal Archives (hereafter SMA), B26-2-519-1 (December 1957), 11.
19. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
20. Guojia tongjiju, *Zhongguo tongji nianjian*, 1983 [China statistical yearbook, 1983] (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1984), 32.
21. For studies of the famine, see Yang Jisheng, *Mubei: Zhongguo liushi niandai dajihuang jishi* [Tombstone: A chronicle of China's great famine in the 1960s] (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu, 2008); Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemheuer, eds., *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); and Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (New York: Walker and Company, 2010). For the post-Great Leap economic crisis, see Nicholas R. Lardy, "The Chinese Economy under Stress, 1958–1965," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 14, *The People's Republic, Part I: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1949–1965*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 360–397.
22. Shanghai tongjiju, *Shanghai tongji nianjian: 1983*, 44.
23. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhonggong Shanghai dangshi dadian* [An encyclopedia of CCP party history in Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 112.
24. Elizabeth Perry has masterfully documented the strike wave that swept across Shanghai in the spring of 1957. The magnitude of that wave was remarkable. Major labor disturbances, including factory walkouts and organized slowdowns, erupted at 587 Shanghai enterprises, involving 30,000 workers. In addition, over 700 enterprises experienced some less serious forms of labor unrest. See Elizabeth J. Perry, "Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957," *China Quarterly*, no. 137 (1994): 1.
25. For how bureaucratically constructed categories shaped socioeconomic inequality in Mao's China, see Feng Wang, *Boundaries and Categories: Rising Inequality in Post-socialist Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), chap. 2.
26. Ji Jingfeng, "Shanghai zhishi qingnian de kenhuang zhibian huodong" [Rustication and border reclamation among Shanghai's educated youth], in *Dangdai Shanghai dangshi wenku: Jiannan tansuo, 1956–1965* [History of the Communist Party in contemporary Shanghai: 1956–1965], ed. Xu Jiangang

- (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2001), 460–471. The pre-1966 nationwide figure of rusticates was about 1.2 million; see Thomas Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 23–24.
27. *Wen hui bao* [Wen Hui daily], January 25 and February 11, 1967.
 28. Christopher Howe, “Labour Organization and Incentives in Industry, before and after the Cultural Revolution,” in *Authority, Participation, and Cultural Change in China*, ed. Stuart Schram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 235.
 29. “Guowuyuan guanyu gaijin dui lingshigong de shiyong he guanli de zanxing guiding” [The State Council’s interim provisions concerning how to improve the use and management of temporary workers], in *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo xianxing fagui huibian* [Collections of existing laws and regulations of the PRC], ed. Guowuyuan fazhiju, 7 vols., volume on labor and personnel laws (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), 87–89.
 30. *Wen hui bao*, September 26, 1964.
 31. SMA, B134-6-1448 (1966), 2–3. The Huangpu River is the Yangtze tributary that runs through Shanghai. “Jumping into the Huangpu River” is the local idiom for committing suicide.
 32. SMA, B127-1-882 (1965), 36.
 33. See Shanghai hongse gongren zaofan zongsilingbu et al., “Teji tonggao” [Urgent notice], January 17, 1967, in *Shanghai gongren geming zaofan zongsilingbu wenxian huibian* [Collection of documents of the Shanghai Workers Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters] (hereafter *WGHQ wenxian huibian*), ed. Gongzongsi Bangongshi, vol. 1 (Shanghai, 1967), AC. I am grateful to Li Xun for sharing this valuable collection of primary documents.
 34. According to official statistics, in 1958 China’s state sector employed 21 million more workers than in 1957, a whopping increase of 87.5 percent. See Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* [Selected important documents since the founding of the PRC], 20 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992–1998) (hereafter *ZY-WXXB*), 12:359–360.
 35. Luo Pinghan, *Da qianxi: 1961–1963 nian de chengzhen renkou jingjian* [The great transfer: Reduction of urban population in 1961–1963] (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 2003), 255–257.
 36. Jin Chongji, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* [Biography of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 4:1642–1643.
 37. See Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long live Mao Zedong Thought] (Wuhan, 1968) (hereafter *Wansui*), 4:33.
 38. Zhang Jinping, “Jingji tiaozheng shiqi Shanghai zhigong de zhi nong huodong” [“Supporting agriculture” activities among Shanghai workers during the economic readjustment], in Xu Jiangan, *Dangdai Shanghai dangshi wenku*, 452. China’s household registration or *hukou* system, which ties welfare rights to the place where one is a resident, was promulgated in the late 1950s. While

the urban population enjoyed guaranteed employment and other benefits from the state, the rural peasants received food allocation from the harvest but little monetary income. For a history of the *hukou* system, see Tiejun Chen and Mark Selden, “The Origins and Social Consequences of China’s Hukou System,” *China Quarterly*, no. 139 (1994): 644–668. For a study of the urban-rural divide in Mao’s China, see Jeremy Brown, *City versus Countryside in Mao’s China: Negotiating the Divide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

39. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 103.
40. *Ibid.*, 103–104.
41. Quoted in Zhu Yongjia, *Sishen chunqiu: Wo dui wenge chuqi de liangduan shishi de huiyi* [My recollections of the early phase of the Cultural Revolution] (unpublished manuscript), 172.
42. The following is drawn from SMA, B134-6-1448 (February 1966), 12–13.
43. SMA, B98-2-15 (March 1967), 37–38. The Cao family was pressured to return to Anhui in March 1967.
44. Shen Fuxiang, *Zhengrong suiyue: Shoubu gongren zaofanpai huiyilu* [Extraordinary times: Memoir of a worker rebel] (Hong Kong: Shidai guoji chubanyouxian gongsi, 2010), 84. I am grateful to Shen Fuxiang for sharing his manuscript with me long before the book was published.
45. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 126, 132.
46. For Gramsci’s idea of the “economic-corporate” form of politics, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 53–54, 131–132, 270–271.
47. For an important discussion of the relationship between the economic and the political under capitalist regimes, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” *New Left Review*, 1st series, 127 (1981): 66–95.
48. Shen Fuxiang, interview by the author, May 25, 2006.
49. For more details about the founding of the group, see Shen Fuxiang, *Zhengrong suiyue*, chap. 11.
50. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 283.
51. *Hongwei bao* [Red defense bulletin], March 16, 1967, in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *A New Collection of Red Guard Publications, Part 2: A Special Compilation of Newspapers in Beijing Area*, 40 vols., ed. Song Yongyi (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2001), 20:7546. The provision of Mao’s works was an indication of a worker’s enhanced political status.
52. For a recollection by a key Quanhongzong organizer, see Fang Yuan, “Duli gonghui Quanhongzong jishi” [A record of the independent union All China Red Laborers], <http://difangwenge.org/read.php?tid=1107&keyword=%B7%BD%D4%B2>, accessed March 3, 2010. For the Quanhongzong episode, see also Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 100–101.

53. The transcript of the meeting can be found in Wang Nianyi, ed., “*Wenhua dageming*” *yanjiu ziliao* [“Cultural Revolution” research materials] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyanshi, 1988), 1:191–193.
54. Fang Yuan, “Duli gonghui Quanhongzong jishi.” The Quanhongzong was declared a reactionary group and banned in late February 1967.
55. Hunter, *Shanghai Journal*, 205–206. For the participation of the rusticated youth in the Cultural Revolution in other parts of China, see Ding Yizhuang, *Zhongguo zhiqing shi: Chulan, 1953–1968* [A History of the rusticated youth movement in China: Early waves, 1953–1968] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 381–427.
56. See Gongzongsi et al., “Jianshou shengchan gangwei, jiudi da nao geming: Jinji tonggao” [Stay fast at production posts, make revolution locally: An urgent proclamation], January 27, 1967, in *WGHQ wenxian huibian*, vol. 1.
57. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 103, 113.
58. Chen Pixian, *Chen Pixian huiyilu: Zai “yiyue fengbao” de zhongxin* [Memoir of Chen Pixian: In the eye of the “January Storm”] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005), 65; Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 97.
59. “Cao Diqu de jiancha” [Cao Diqu’s self-criticism], March 12, 1967, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution database], ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010) (hereafter CRDB).
60. Shanghaishi geming weiyuanhui fandui jingji zhuyi lianluo zongbu, *Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming zhong Shanghaishi fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji*; also see “Chen Pixian de jiantao” [Chen Pixian’s self-criticism], March 1967, in CRDB.
61. *Zhibu shenghuo* [Life in party branches], no. 4 (January 25, 1967): 27, 30.
62. *Gongren zaofan bao* [Bulletin of worker rebels], no. 3 (January 14, 1967), in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *A New Collection of Red Guard Publications, Part 3: A Comprehensive Compilation of Tabloids in the Provinces*, ed. Song Yongyi (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2005) (hereafter CCRM [2005]), 18:7551.
63. Shanghaishi geming weiyuanhui fandui jingji zhuyi lianluo zongbu, *Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming zhong Shanghaishi fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji*. This sum was more than one-fifth of the entire monthly payroll of Shanghai’s state enterprises, which in 1966 was 170 million yuan. Shanghai tongjiju, *Shanghai tongji nianjian: 1983*, 329.
64. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 114; see also Mayor Cao’s self-denunciation, “Cao Diqu de jiancha,” in CRDB.
65. For clashes between the WGHQ and the Scarlet Guards, see Hunter, *Shanghai Journal*, chap. 10; Li Xun, *Da bengkuai*, chap. 8; and Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 85–90.
66. A plot of “triple stoppage” (*san ting*)—that the Scarlet Guards attempted to shut down electricity, water, and transportation services across the city—was widely reported, although there was no evidence that such activities had ever been implemented. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 88–89.

67. Some foreign ships intentionally hung the Chinese national flag upside down to express displeasure. The port often had to pay hefty fines (in precious hard currencies) to compensate foreign shipping companies for losses. *Gongren zaofan bao*, no. 93, January 12, 1968, in CCRM (2005), 18:7906. For the economic disruptions, see also Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 115.
68. Shanghaishi geming weiyuanhui fandui jingji zhuyi lianluo zongbu, *Wuchan jieji wenhua dageming zhong Shanghaishi fandui jingji zhuyi dashiji*.
69. *Wen hui bao*, March 12, 1968.
70. With the formation of communes in the 1950s, Chinese peasants no longer had control over their harvest. Peasants were dependent on the collectives for their share of the grain. See Jean C. Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: The Political Economy of Village Government* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), chaps. 2–7.
71. *Jiefang ribao* [Liberation daily], January 19, 1967. See also *Wen hui bao*, January 20 and February 9, 1967.
72. Gongzongsi et al., “Jianjue zhichi geming nongmin yundong, chedi cuihui fan geming jingji zhuyi!” [Resolutely support revolutionary peasant movement, thoroughly destroy counterrevolutionary economism!], January 16, 1967, in *WGHQ wenxian huibian*, vol. 1.
73. “An Appeal to All Revolutionary Commune Members and Poor, Middle and Lower Peasants,” wall poster, January 14, 1967, quoted in Stanley Karnow, *Mao and China: A Legacy of Turmoil*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 249.
74. Stuart Schram, “Introduction: The Cultural Revolution in Historical Perspective,” in *Authority, Participation, and Cultural Change in China*, ed. Stuart Schram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 90–92.
75. Hinton, *Turning Point in China*, 66–67. Another typical narrative: “An alliance of industrial workers, radical students, and a restive stratum of lower- and middle-level party cadres, together with representatives from the Central Cultural Revolution Group in Peking, formed the decisive political coalition that ultimately rose to power . . . [and] delivered Shanghai from the brink of total civil and financial collapse and established the basis of a new revolutionary municipal state system.” Nee, “Revolution and Bureaucracy,” 324–325. For a reiteration of this view, see Jiang Hongsheng, “Paris Commune in Shanghai.”
76. Harry Harding, “The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–1969,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, *The People’s Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution, 1966–1982*, MacFarquhar and Fairbank, eds., 159.
77. Wang Nianyi, *Dadongluan de niandai* [The era of great turmoil] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2006), 147.
78. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhonggong Shanghai dangshi dadian*, 123.
79. Zhu Yongjia, *Sishen chungqiu*, 128–129, 140. See also Ma Da, *Ma Da zishu* [Memoir of Ma Da: My six decades as a newspaperman] (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 2004), 39.

80. According to Li Xun, it was Chen Pixian who proposed the draft of a letter to the public. Chen's memoir affirms Li Xun's account, although he is curiously brief on details, because it would be to his advantage to claim the credit for initiating the stabilizing measure. The memoir of Xu Jingxian (a former party propagandist who turned rebel leader), however, suggests that it was Xu himself who first made the proposal. See Chen Pixian, *Chen Pixian huiyilu*, 123; Xu Jingxian, *Shinian yimeng* [Ten years, a dream: Memoir of Xu Jingxian] (Hong Kong: Shidai guoji chubanshe, 2005), 22–24; and Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 250–253.
81. *Wen hui bao*, January 5, 1967.
82. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 251.
83. Zhu Yongjia, *Sishen Chunqiu*, 123.
84. *Ibid.*, 124.
85. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 253. Fan was later reprimanded by other WGHQ leaders for his unauthorized act.
86. Zhu Yongjia, *Sishen Chunqiu*, 124.
87. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 254.
88. *Ibid.*, 291–293.
89. *Ibid.*, 294. See also Chen Pixian, *Chen Pixian huiyilu*, 131–132.
90. *Wen hui bao*, January 9, 1967.
91. Chen Pixian, *Chen Pixian huiyilu*, 123.
92. Zhu Yongjia, *Sishen chunqiu*, 127.
93. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhonggong Shanghai dangshi dadian*, 124.
94. Chen Pixian, *Chen Pixian huiyilu*, 131–132.
95. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 255.
96. *Wen hui bao*, January 6, 1967. See also Shen Fuxiang, *Zhengrong suiyue*, chap. 17.
97. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 293–294.
98. It was well known that Wang's wife was a temporary worker who during the economistic wind protested against discriminatory labor practices at the Municipal Trade Union. It was also rumored that she had joined the Red Workers and that Wang's lack of enthusiasm for opposing economism might have been related to his wife's status. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 102–103. Dai Liqing, a key WGHQ leader, was a temporary worker and reportedly had once joined the Red Workers as well. For information on Dai's life history, see *ibid.*, 61–63.
99. Harding, "Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–1969," 153.
100. *Wen hui bao*, January 13, 1967.
101. Hunter, *Shanghai Journal*, 218.
102. Shen Fuxiang, *Zhengrong suiyue*, 300–301.
103. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 298.
104. *RMRB*, January 9, 1967.
105. Stuart Schram, ed., *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters, 1956–1971* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 275. Mao was here referring to the rebels' takeover of the *Wen Hui Daily*.

106. *Wansui*, 4:283. The English translation is slightly modified from Schram, *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed*, 276.
107. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949–1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2003) (hereafter *MZDZ, 1949–1976*), 2:1468.
108. *RMRB*, January 12, 1967. The English translation is from *Peking Review* 10, no. 4 (January 20, 1967): 5.
109. See “Circular of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Opposition to Economism,” “Circular of the CCP Central Committee Concerning the Prohibition of the Corrosion of the Masses,” and “No. 14 Document of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council,” in Union Research Institute, *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966–1967* (Hong Kong, 1968), 159–170.
110. *RMRB*, January 12, 1967.
111. “Zhang Chunqiao zai Shanghai shi geming zaofanpai zuotanhui shang de jianghua” [Zhang Chunqiao’s remarks at Shanghai revolutionary rebels’ meeting], January 11, 1967, in *CRDB*.
112. “Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan zai Shanghai huanhu zhongyang hedian dahui de jianghua” [Speeches by Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan at the rally celebrating the Party Center’s congratulation telegram], January 12, 1967, in *CRDB*.
113. *RMRB*, January 13, 1967.
114. *RMRB*, January 22, 1967. The English translation appeared in *Peking Review*, January 27, 1967, 7–9.
115. *Hongqi*, no. 2 (January 16, 1967).
116. *RMRB*, January 31, 1967.
117. “Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan, zhongyang junwei, zhongyang wenge xiaozu guanyu renming jiefangjun jianjue zhichi geming zuopai qunzhong de jue ding” [Decision of the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the CMC, and the CCRG regarding the PLA’s resolute support for revolutionary leftist masses], January 23, 1967, in *CRDB*.
118. “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu guangbo diantai wenti de buchong zhishi” [Supplementary decision of the CCP Central Committee regarding radio broadcasting stations], January 23, 1967, in *CRDB*.
119. *MZDZ, 1949–1976*, 2:1475.
120. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 177.
121. “Zhongyang junwei guanyu jizhong liliang zhixing zhi zuo, zhi nong, zhi gong, jun guan, jun xun renwu de jue ding” [The CMC’s instruction concerning concentrating forces in implementing tasks of supporting the left, supporting agricultural production, supporting industrial production, exercising military control, and conducting military training], March 19, 1967, in *CRDB*.
122. *Hongqi*, no. 5 (March 30, 1967): 7–8. Between early 1967 and 1972, as many as 2.8 million PLA officers and soldiers participated in various interventionary tasks. Junshi kexueyuan junshi lishi yanjiubu, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun quanshi* [The complete history of the PLA], vol. 1 (Beijing: Junshi

- kexue chubanshe, 2000), 376. In April 1967, 28,000 PLA personnel were dispatched to 2,041 schools in Beijing and conducted military and political training of 1,770,000 students and teachers. Deng Lifeng, “San zhi liang jun’ shulun” [A study of the “three supports and two militaries”], *Dangdai zhongguoshi yanjiu* [Studies in contemporary Chinese history] 8, no. 6 (2001): 50. For more on the “three supports and two militaries” policy, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 177–183.
123. “Zhongyang junwei chongshen junqu wenhua dageming fenqi fenpi jingxing de zhishi” [Reiteration of the CMC’s instruction concerning implementing the Cultural Revolution in military regions by phases and in batches], January 28, 1967; and “Zhongyang junwei guanyu jundui duoquan fanwei de guiding” [The CMC’s provisions concerning the scope of power seizures in the military], February 16, 1967, both in *CRDB*.
124. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 176.
125. *RMRB*, February 10, 1967.
126. *RMRB*, March 10, 1967.
127. Dong Guoqiang and Andrew G. Walder, “From Truce to Dictatorship: Creating a Revolutionary Committee in Jiangsu,” *China Journal*, no. 68 (2012): 1.
128. The Paris Commune was often extolled in Mao-era political discussions as a form of popular political action and radical egalitarian democracy. For discussions of the Paris Commune during the early months of the Cultural Revolution, see John B. Starr, “Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eyes,” *China Quarterly*, no. 49 (1972): 113–121.
129. For reference to the Paris Commune in the Sixteen Points, see James T. Myers, Jürgen Domes, and Erik von Groeling, eds., *Chinese Politics: Documents and Analysis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 1:274.
130. Quoted in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 160.
131. “Zhou Enlai zai junji ganbu huiyi shang de jianghua” [Zhou Enlai’s speech at the conference of army-rank officers], March 13, 1967, in *CRDB*.
132. Roderick MacFarquhar, “The Succession to Mao and the End of Maoism,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 15, *The People’s Republic of China, Part 2: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1966–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 306.
133. For examples, see *RMRB*, January 17, 20, and 31, 1967.
134. “Lun wuchan jieji gemingpai de duoquan douzheng” [On the proletarian revolutionaries’ struggle to seize power] and “Lun wuchan jieji de geming jilü he geming quanwei” [On proletarian revolutionary discipline and authority], in *Hongqi*, no. 3 (February 3, 1967): 13–21.
135. *Hongqi*, no. 3 (February 3, 1967), 20–21.
136. Xu Jingxian, *Shinian yimeng*, 84.
137. *Jiefang ribao*, February 7, 1967.
138. Nee, “Revolution and Bureaucracy,” 354. Walder estimated that the Commune was supported by probably less than one-fourth of Shanghai’s politi-

- cally active working population. Walder, *Chang Ch'un-Ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution*, 61.
139. “Zhang Chunqiao zai Shanghai renmin gongshe chengli dahui shang de jianghua” [Zhang Chunqiao’s speech at the inaugural rally of the Shanghai People’s Commune], February 5, 1967, in *CRDB*.
140. *Wen hui bao*, February 7, 1967.
141. Xu Jingxian, *Shinian yimeng*, 84.
142. *MZDZ, 1949–1976*, 2:1481.
143. *Ibid*.
144. *Wansui*, 4:291.
145. Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 173.
146. “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu duoquan wenti xuanchuan baodao de tongzhi” [The CCP Central Committee’s notification concerning propaganda and reporting on struggles to seize power], February 19, 1967, in *CRDB*. It is noteworthy that only four of the thirteen provincial power seizures that had taken place by the end of January were officially ratified.
147. “Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan zai ‘Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi, jinyibu kaizhan sanjiehe duoquan douzheng shishi dahui’ shang de jianghua” [Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan’s talks at the “Holding High the Banner of Mao Zedong Thought, Further the Struggle of Power Seizure through Three-in-One Unity” oath-taking rally], February 24, 1967, in *CRDB*.
148. Although the protest activities of temporary workers were mostly suppressed in 1967, several policies were later adopted to partly redress labor grievances. In 1971, temporary workers who had entered the workforce before 1966 were converted to permanent status, and differences in medical and welfare provisions between union and nonunion members were abolished. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 116.
149. “Zhou Zongli diyici jiejian Neimeng sifangmian daibiao jianghua jiyao” [Record of Premier Zhou’s first meeting with delegates of the four sides in Inner Mongolia], February 10, 1967, in *CRDB*. For various stabilization measures, see Union Research Institute, *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, 163–378.
150. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 330.
151. Gongzongsi, “Tonggao” [Proclamation], February 11, 1967, in *WGHQ wenxian huibian*, vol. 1.
152. *Gongren zaofan bao*, no. 10 (March 4, 1967), in *CCRM* (2005), 18:7576.
153. Gongzongsi, “Poushi Geng Jinzhang, zaikan ‘beishang fanhu erbintuan’” [Exposing Geng Jinzhang, reexamining “the Second Regiment”], February 11, 1967, in *WGHQ wenxian huibian*, vol. 1.
154. See Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 126.
155. Quoted in Hunter, *Shanghai Journal*, 250.
156. Gongzongsi, “‘Zhi nong si’ yixiaocuo ren zuize nantao! Weishenme hui fasheng Shanghai dasha shijian?” [The small clique of the “Support-Agriculture Headquarters” cannot shirk responsibility for their crimes! Why did the

- Shanghai Mansion Incident occur?), February 27, 1967; “Kan! Zhi nong si yixiaocuo wangming zhi tu jiujiing yao gan shenme?” [Look! What did the desperadoes of the “Support-Agriculture Headquarters” really want to do?], February 26, 1967, in *WGHQ wenxian huibian*, vol. 1.
157. Shanghai wenge shiliao zhengli bianzhuhan xiaozu, *Shanghai wenhua dageming shihua* [A history of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai] (Shanghai, 1992), 268.
158. For the students’ anti-Zhang activities, see Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 338–356; and Wu Zhongjie, *Fudan wangshi* [Old stories of Fudan University] (Nanning: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 177–186.
159. The following account of the Lian Si episode draws mainly from Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 132–141; and Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 365–391.
160. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 133; see also Chen Xianfan, *Minzu Lei: Hongdong zhongwai de “basi” shijian* [Tears of the nation: The “August 4th” Incident that shocked the world] (Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 1988), 16–17.
161. For a classic discussion of the distinction between rebel and conservative positions during the Cultural Revolution, see Hong Yung Lee, “The Radical Students in Kwangtung during the Cultural Revolution,” *China Quarterly*, no. 64 (1975): 645–683; for a criticism of the distinction, see Andrew Walder, “Factional Conflict at Beijing University, 1966–1968,” *China Quarterly*, no. 188 (2006): 1023–1047.
162. For these incidents, see Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 136–137.
163. See Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 373–377; and Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 137–138.
164. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, ed., *Zhonggong Shanghai lishi shilu, 1949–2004* [A history of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai, 1949–2004] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), 450.
165. Interview of Chen Buchang by the author, July 25, 2008.
166. Quoted in Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 139.
167. *Ibid.*, 141.
168. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhonggong Shanghai dangshi dadian*, 127.
169. See Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, eds., *Wenhua dageming he tade yiduan sichao* [Heterodox currents of thought in the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1997), 425–430.
170. *Wenge tongxun* [Cultural Revolution bulletin], no. 12 (February 1968), in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *Red Guard Publications* (Washington, DC: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1975), 14:4623–4624.
171. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 21.
172. *Wansui*, 4:314.
173. Li Xun, *Da bengkui*, 384.
174. Perry and Li, *Proletarian Power*, 187.
175. *Ibid.*, 192.
176. Peter Hudis and Kevin A. Anderson, eds., *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 195. For Luxemburg’s notion of the mass strike, see *ibid.*, 168–199.

177. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 11.

5. Revolution Is Dead, Long Live the Revolution

1. See Dong Guoqiang and Andrew Walder, “Nanjing’s Failed ‘January Revolution’ of 1967: The Inner Politics of a Provincial Power Seizure,” *China Quarterly*, no. 203 (2010): 677.
2. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 214. In late July 1967, rebels in the central Chinese city of Wuhan assaulted the local garrison, and the Million Heroes, a group favored by the PLA, counterattacked. The situation was deemed so serious that Mao had to dispatch a team to mediate. In what was dubbed the Wuhan Incident, army soldiers attacked and briefly detained Mao’s envoys, apparently unaware that Mao, who was on a confidential inspection tour, was actually in Wuhan at the time. A startled Mao was hastily flown to Shanghai, escorted by fighter jets. Beijing responded swiftly by ordering army units and naval gunboats to approach the city in preparation for pacification. On the Wuhan Incident, see also Shaoguang Wang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995), 133–180; and Shaoguang Wang, “The Wuhan Incident Revisited,” *Chinese Historical Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 241–270.
3. *Hongqi* [Red flag], no. 12 (August 1967): 43–47. For Mao’s oscillating and contradictory stances in the fateful summer of 1967, see Michael Schoenhals, “‘Why Don’t We Arm the Left?’ Mao’s Culpability for the Cultural Revolution’s ‘Great Chaos’ of 1967,” *China Quarterly*, no. 182 (2005): 277–300.
4. Mao’s conversation with Edgar Snow, December 18, 1970, in Mao Zedong, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong’s manuscripts since the founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996), 13:163. The explosive political situation took on a literal meaning in Changchun, the provincial capital of Jilin, where rival organizations designed and successfully exploded several primitive dirty bombs, or “radioactive self-defense bombs,” as they were called. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 216, 219–220. The nationwide political chaos and factional fighting caused major economic disruption. According to a State Council report, in the month of September only 26 percent of the national daily average output of steel and pig iron, 50 percent of coal, 60 percent of electricity, 40 percent of crude oil, and 46 percent of railway transportation volume had been fulfilled; for the third quarter of 1967, only 50 percent of the national industrial targets had been fulfilled. Jin Chongji, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* [Biography of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 4:1993.
5. Quoted in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 229.
6. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949–1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2003) (hereafter MZDZ, 1949–1976), 2:1487.

7. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong Thought] (Wuhan, 1968) (hereafter *Wansui*), 4:319. Mao left Beijing on July 14 and returned to Beijing on September 23. For Mao's inspection tour in 1967, see *MZDZ, 1949–1976*, 2:1491–1506.
8. “Fu Chongbi chuanda Mao Zedong guanyu zhubu shixian dalianhe, huifu dangzhuzhi de tanhua” [General Fu Chongbi's report on Chairman Mao's conversation regarding gradually establishing great alliances and restoring party organizations], July 1967, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution database], ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010) (hereafter *CRDB*).
9. *Wansui*, 4:327–328.
10. *Ibid.*, 4:324, 328–329. Mao's plan turned out to be too optimistic. By the end of 1967, only two more provincial-level revolutionary committees, Tianjin and Inner Mongolia, had been formed.
11. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, 229.
12. Union Research Institute, *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966–1967* (Hong Kong, 1968), 505–510.
13. *Renmin ribao* [People's daily] (hereafter *RMRB*), October 2, 1967.
14. “Zhongyang shouzhang fenbie jiejian dazhuan yuanxiao daibiao de jianghua” [Speeches of party leaders at the meeting with representatives of universities and colleges], September 17, 1967, in *CRDB*.
15. Union Research Institute, *CCP Documents of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, 566.
16. Similar decrees ordering the termination of the Red Guards' “revolutionary link-up” were issued on February 17, March 7, March 19, April 17, and April 20. For various related documents, see *ibid.*, 299–302, 377–378, 421–422, and 429–430.
17. Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 339–340.
18. Marc J. Blecher, *China: Iconoclasm and Innovation in a Revolutionary Socialist Country* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), 86.
19. Hong Yung Lee, *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 9.
20. Harry Harding, “The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–1969,” in *The Cambridge History of China, the People's Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution 1966–1982*, ed. Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 184.
21. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 340.
22. Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 257–258.
23. Shaoguang Wang, “‘New Trends of Thought’ during the Cultural Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 8, no. 21 (1999): 204.
24. Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 148.
25. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 343–344.

26. For example, the Shengwulian is mentioned neither in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, nor in Bu Weihua, *Zalan jiu shijie: Wenhua dageming de dongluan yu baojie, 1966–1968* [Smashing the old world: Turmoil and disaster of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2008), two of the most authoritative general histories of the Cultural Revolution. An exception is Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao's book, which makes a rare reference to the group by portraying it as a case of "mass confusion": "Under the banners of 'class struggle' . . . violence went rampant all across the country. In this dazzlingly bizarre fire and smoke of armed violence, the Chinese people became confused, not knowing which way to go. At the end of 1967, a group which called itself the 'United Organization of Hunan Proletarian Revolutionaries' published an article titled 'Where Is China Heading?' putting forth the idea of establishing a 'Chinese People's Commune,' adding to the confusion caused by factional conflicts." Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Wenhua da geming shi nian shi* [A History of the Cultural Revolution decade] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1986), 452.
27. Jonathan Unger, "Whither China?: Yang Xiguang, Red Capitalists, and the Social Turmoil of the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China* 17, no. 1 (1991): 3–37.
28. *Ibid.*, 22.
29. Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism*, 149; see also Graham Young, "Mao Zedong and the Class Struggle in Socialist Society," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 16 (1986): 60–61. Jonathan Unger's inspiring article is a rare exception in its attempt to contextualize the critical-theoretical development in Hunan in the vicissitudes of local events. See Unger, "Whither China?"
30. According to Red Guard publications, over 3,000 were attacked in May 1966 alone, and an unknown number committed suicide. Changshashi shizhong jingsong zhandoudui et al., "Hunan Changsha diqu wuchan jieji wenhua dageming liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji, 1966.3–1967.8" [A chronology of the two-line struggles in the Cultural Revolution in Changsha, Hunan, March 1966 to August 1967] (hereafter "Changsha liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji"), September 15, 1967, in *CRDB*. Many cadres considered the fledgling movement a new purge. Wang Renzhong, the party boss of Hubei and second secretary of the CCP's South-Central Bureau, the jurisdiction of which included Hunan, unmistakably stated in the early summer of 1966: "In 1957, a total of 550,000 rightists were ferreted out. This campaign would uncover even more rightists. The percentage would be no fewer than three percentage points and it could reach five points." Shaoguang Wang, *Failure of Charisma*, 58.
31. Hunan daxue wenge xuanchuanzu, ed., *Hunan daxue wuchan jieji wenhua dageming jiyao, 1966.4.18–11.21* [The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution at Hunan University: Chronicle of major events, April 18, 1966—November 21], November 1966, AC; "Changsha liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji," in *CRDB*.

32. Hunan daxue wenge xuanchuanzu, ed., *Hunan daxue wuchan jieji wenhua dageming jiyao*, AC; Ding Kesi, “Wo suo jingli de ‘bayijiu’ shijian” [The “August 19 Incident” that I witnessed], *Changsha wenshi* [Changsha cultural and historical materials], no. 17 (2004): 27.
33. *RMRB*, August 23, 1966. The Municipal Party Committee was subsequently reorganized, and municipal party officials were dismissed. See *Hunan ribao* [Hunan daily], August 31, 1966.
34. Zhonggong Hunan shengwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhongguo gongchandang Hunan dangshi, 1949–1978* [History of the Chinese Communist Party in Hunan, 1949–1978] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2009), 438–439.
35. “Zhang Pinghua tongzhi jiuyue ershi ri xiawu jiejian geming shisheng daibiao dahui shang de jianghua” [Comrade Zhang Pinghua’s speech at the meeting with revolutionary students and teachers on the afternoon of September 24], September 24, 1966, AC.
36. See Point 7 of the Sixteen Points in *China’s Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party*, ed. Michael Schoenhals (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 38.
37. Hunan difangzhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi* [Hunan provincial gazetteer], vol. 3, *Gongchandang zhi* [The Communist Party] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 212.
38. “Changsha liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji.”
39. Yang Xiguang, “The Cultural Revolution’s Disruption of the Socialist System,” in *The Chinese Intellectuals: Selected Readings*, ed. Yao Zhu and Linda Seebach (Northfield, MN: Small World Information Services, 1987), 14.
40. See, for example, *RMRB*, August 13, 1966; and *Hongqi*, no. 11 (August 21, 1966): 36–37. For discussions of the ideal of the Paris Commune in Chinese political discussions, see Maurice Meisner, “Images of the Paris Commune in Chinese Marxist Thought,” in *Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism: Eight Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 132–154; and John B. Starr, “Revolution in Retrospect: The Paris Commune through Chinese Eyes,” *China Quarterly*, no. 49 (1972): 106–125.
41. Changsha Shizhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Changsha shizhi* [Changsha municipal gazetteer] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1995), 2:439.
42. “Changsha liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji”; “Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan, zhongyang junwei, zhongyang wenge guanyu Hunan Hongqijun, Hong Daodan deng hongweibing zuzhi dao Hunansheng junqu dongshou daren, zhuaren wenti de zhishi” [Instruction of the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the CMC and the CCRG regarding the Hunan Red Army and the Red Missile Group beating and detaining people at the Hunan Provincial Military Region], January 20, 1967, in *CRDB*.
43. “Long Shujin de jiantao” [Long Shujin’s Self-Criticism], July 31, 1967, in *CRDB*. General Long Shujin was the commander of the Hunan Provincial Military Region.
44. See “Changsha liangtiao luxian douzheng dashiji”; and “Quanjun wengeban chuanda zhongyang wenge guanyu Hunan Xiangjiang Fenglei, Hongqijun de

- pishi” [PLA Cultural Revolution Office’s transmission of the CCRG’s instruction regarding Hunan’s Xiang River Storm and Red Flag Army], in *CRDB*.
45. *Changsha wanbao* [Changsha evening news], February 6, 1967. Ironically, the manhunt was led by members of the University Headquarters or Gao Si, once Hunan’s staunchest rebels. The collaboration of the Gao Si with the army pitted the group against its onetime rebel comrades and won it the stigma of “new conservatives,” a disparaging reference to the original conservative organizations favored by party authorities during the earlier months. Zhan Xianli and Huang Shaoxian, “Hunan Gao Si daibiao xiang zhongyang wenge de shumian jiancha” [Written self-criticism submitted to the Central Cultural Revolution Group by Gao Si and Gong Lian delegates], August 8, 1967, in *CRDB*.
 46. “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu Hunan wenti de ruogan jue ding” [The CCP Center’s decisions regarding the situation in Hunan], August 10, 1967, in *CRDB*.
 47. Interview of Hu Yong by the author, June 28, 2008.
 48. Hunan jianxun bianjibu, “Fan’geming dazahui Shengwulian zui’e shi” [A history of crimes perpetrated by the counterrevolutionary hodgepodge Shengwulian] (hereafter “Shengwulian zui’e shi”), *Hunan jianxun* [Hunan news bulletin], nos. 71–73 (March 1968), AC.
 49. Li Zhengxiang, *Sishiqi jun zai Hunan “san zhi liang jun” jishi* [Chronicle of the 47th Army’s “three supports and two militaries” activities in Hunan] (Changsha: privately published, 2004), 65.
 50. Interview of Chen Yinan by the author, June 14, 2006.
 51. *Xin Changsha bao* [New Changsha daily], January 29, 1968. During the Cultural Revolution Mao was often idolized as the “great savior” (*dajixing*) of the whole Chinese people.
 52. “Zhongyang shouzhang jiejian Hunan zaofanpai daibiaotuan tanhua jiyao” [Summary of talks of central leaders at the meeting with delegation of Hunan rebels], August 16, 1967, in Hunansheng geming weiyuanhui choubei xiaozu and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun lujun di sishiqijun, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu Hunan wenti de ruogan jue ding (fu youguan bufen cailiao)” [Decisions regarding Hunan by the CCP Center (with supplementary materials)] (pamphlet, Changsha, August 1967), 82, AC.
 53. “Zhou Enlai deng huida qunzhong zuzhi daibiao guanyu dalianhe wenti” [Zhou Enlai and other leaders’ response to delegates of mass organizations regarding the great alliance], September 24, 1967, in *CRDB*.
 54. From September 7 to September 14 alone, 5,510 guns (including 280 machine guns), 28 artillery pieces, 621 rounds of artillery shell, 11,853 hand grenades, 1,077,026 rounds of bullets, and 5,573 kilograms of explosives were collected. Hunan jianxun bianjibu, *Hunan jianxun*, no. 27 (September 1967). Although these measures ostensibly targeted the feuding Gong Lian and Xiang River alike, the latter perceived them as a ploy to weaken its strength. Xiang River supporters put up posters with such slogans as “Surrendering guns is suicidal”

- to declare their defiance, and a few leaders reportedly even proposed to set up the group's own gun-manufacturing plant. Hunansheng qixiangju hongqi zongbu, "Yu Shengwulian he jizuopai douzheng dashiji" [A chronicle of struggle with the Shengwulian and the ultraleftists] (Changsha, pamphlet, February 14, 1968), AC. For an eyewitness account of armed clashes in Changsha in the summer of 1967, see Chen Yanan, *Qingchun wuben: Yige zaofanpai gongren de shinian wenge* [The bygone youth: A worker rebel's Cultural Revolution decade] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), chaps. 11–13.
55. The following account draws from "Shengwulian zui'e shi"; Shengzhi gelian, "Shengwulian zuixinglu" [Crimes of the Shengwulian] (pamphlet, February 8, 1968), AC; and Shengzhi gelian, "Fan'geming dazahui 'Shengwulian' zhengshi chulong de qianqian houhou" [How the counterrevolutionary hodgepodge "Shengwulian" came into being] (pamphlet, February 21, 1968), AC.
 56. Gaoxiao fenglei et al., "Lianhe shengming" [Joint declaration] (handbill, August 30, 1967), AC.
 57. Xiangjiang fenglei et al., "Guanyu jianjue yonghu, quanli cujin, shisi hanwei geming dalianhe de lianhe shengming" [A joint declaration regarding resolutely support, vigorously promote, and defend until death the revolutionary great alliance] (handbill, September 30, 1967), AC.
 58. See "Shengwulian zui'e shi."
 59. In Hunan, the local pro-Communist or anti-KMT guerrilla forces were sizable, numbering over 100,000. See Hunan difangzhi bianzhuang weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi*, vol. 3, *Gongchangdang zhi*, 135.
 60. Changsha geming dapipan zhihui, "Guanyu fan'geming zuzhi 'shisi baowei Mao Zhuxi geming luxian dixia wuzhuang zhuan'an diaochatuan' de chubu cailiao" [Preliminary materials regarding counterrevolutionary organization "Investigation Group of the Special Case of Hunan Underground Communist Armed Forces"] (pamphlet, April 17, 1968), AC.
 61. Shengzhi gelian, "Fan'geming dazahui 'Shengwulian' zhengshi chulong de qianqian houhou"; Hunansheng qixiangju hongqi zongbu jinggangshan bingtuan, "Yu Shengwulian he jizuopai douzheng dashiji."
 62. "Zhou Enlai jiejian Hunan zaofanpai daibiao de jianghua" [Zhou Enlai's talk at the meeting with rebel representatives from Hunan], October 9, 1967, in *CRDB*.
 63. Chen Yanan, "Wenge zhong Hunan 'Shengwulian' wenti gaishu" [A sketch of Hunan's 'Shengwulian' episode during the Cultural Revolution] (unpublished manuscript).
 64. Jonathan Unger, "Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang" (1989). I am grateful to Jonathan Unger for generously sharing notes of the interviews.
 65. For economic activities in association with the Shengwulian, see *Xin Changsha bao*, March 6, 11, 13, and 20, 1968. Yang Xiguang recalled having participated in conferences of contract workers, who referred to Marx in demanding improvements in their economic circumstances and argued that the proletariat should put a slogan on their banners—abolition of the capitalist

- employment system (i.e., contract work). Unger, “Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang,” 28.
66. From late December 1966 to early January 1967 alone, for example, municipal officials were compelled to distribute over 4 million yuan as back wages, subsidies, and bonuses to disgruntled workers. See “Changsha liangtiao luvian douzheng dashiji.”
 67. A Chinese demographer estimated that as many as 2.5 million people (7.5 percent of the total provincial population), mostly rural peasants, perished in 1959–1961. Cao Shuji, *Da jihuang: 1959–1961 de Zhongguo renkou* [The great famine: Population of China in 1959–1961] (Hong Kong: Shidai guoji chuban, 2005), 95. A report submitted to Mao by one of his close advisers disclosed that famine-related mortality in some rural communities adjacent to Shaoshan, Mao’s hometown, ranged between 10 and 20 percent. See Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* [Selected important documents since the founding of the PRC], 20 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992–1998), 14:301–302.
 68. Hunan difangzhi bianzhuang weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi* [Hunan provincial gazetteer], vol. 7, *Zonghe jingji (laodong)* [General economy (labor)] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1996), 47, 92.
 69. *Ibid.*, 139–140; Hunan difangzhi bianzhuang weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi* [Hunan provincial gazetteer], vol. 1, *Dashiji* [Chronology of major events] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1999), 743.
 70. For local news reports on economism, see *Changsha wanbao*, January 21, 23, 25, and 31, 1967; and *Hunan ribao*, January 19 and 20, 1968.
 71. That veterans pressed demands with the party authorities was not new. In 1957, many veterans had raised demands that the party viewed as beyond the legitimate boundary. In Liaoning, for instance, one veteran was accused of claiming that “veterans were abused everywhere” and of inciting others to go on strike. Some in Guizhou organized a China Veterans’ Association, complaining that veterans had not received adequate attention. The ringleader reportedly even expanded his criticism of the local cadres into an attack on the very notion of party leadership, arguing that although American-style democracy was no good, French democracy should be adopted in China. He also spread such words as “When students kick up a fuss they boycott classes, when workers kick up a fuss they go on strike, when veterans kick up a fuss they should draw their guns and go up to the mountains.” Gordon White, “The Politics of Demobilized Soldiers from Liberation to Cultural Revolution,” *China Quarterly*, no. 82 (1980): 205–206. For an excellent study of veterans’ life in the People’s Republic of China, see Neil J. Diamant, *Embattled Glory: Veterans, Military Families, and the Politics of Patriotism in China, 1949–2007* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).
 72. Hunan Hongqijun wenti lianhe diaochaotuan, “Hunan Hongqijun dashiji” [A chronology of the Hunan Red Flag Army] (pamphlet, July 31, 1967), AC. The group’s leader, Bi Jian, had been repeatedly denied proper civilian employment because of his alleged past connection with the KMT. Past political history

was a major problem for many PLA veterans, particularly in Hunan. In 1949, Changsha's KMT units surrendered to the PLA. Surrendered KMT units were reorganized into PLA units, and many former KMT soldiers—now PLA soldiers—participated in the Korean War. When they were demobilized in the late 1950s and resettled back in Hunan, their past ties with the KMT made them vulnerable in a political milieu that increasingly focused on class status and personal political history.

73. “Zhongyang shouzhang diliuci jiejian Hunan daibiaotuan shi de jianghua” [Central leaders’ talk at the sixth meeting with the Hunan delegation], August 15, 1967, in *CRDB*.
74. Interview of Liu Haoyu by the author, June 2, 2006.
75. Liu Haoyu, *Ren, gui, ren* [From human to monster and back to human] (Changsha: privately published, 2002), 60.
76. For the *New Hunan Daily* case in 1957, see Zhu Zheng, Luo Yingwen, and Liu Haoyu, eds., 1957: “*Xin Hunan Bao*” *Ren* [1957: The staff of the *New Hunan Daily*] (Changsha: privately published, 2002).
77. Zhonggong Hunan shengwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhongguo gongchandang Hunan dangshi*, 269, 272, 324–326.
78. Interview of Liu Haoyu by the author, July 11, 2008.
79. See, for example, Tang Lin, “Wei *Xin Hunan bao* ‘fandang youpai jituan’ da yuan’an de chedi pingfan er douzheng” [Struggle for the thorough reversal of the wrongful case of the “antiparty, rightist ring” at the *New Hunan Daily*] (pamphlet, September 27, 1967), AC; *Xin Hunan bao zhengzhi pohai konggaotuan*, “Gei quanguo wuchanjieji geming zaofanpai zhanyou de huyushu” [A letter of appeal to the proletarian revolutionary rebel comrades in the whole country] (pamphlet, September 13, 1967), AC.
80. Interview of Liu Haoyu by the author, July 11, 2008.
81. The total number of rusticates in Hunan between 1962 and 1966 was sizable in proportion to the urban population, reaching 78,000 according to official sources. Hunan difangzhi bianzhan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi*, vol. 7, *Zonghe jingji (laodong)*, 67. In 1966, the population of Changsha, the provincial capital, was 700,000.
82. For example, of over 6,000 Changsha rusticates in Jiangyong County in southern Hunan, 84 percent were from families of various nonred categories. Han Shaogong, ed., *Women yiqi zouguo: Baiming zhiqing xie zhiqing* [We spent those years together: A hundred rusticated youths’ recollections] (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1998), 291.
83. Gordon White, “The Politics of Hsia-Hsiang Youth,” *China Quarterly*, no. 59 (1974): 491–517.
84. “Tongshanling jianwen” [What we have witnessed at Tongshanling], *Geming qingnian* [Revolutionary youth], no. 2 (November 10, 1967), AC.
85. In one state farm in Guiyang County in southern Hunan, for example, it was reported that 80 percent of the female rusticates were either molested or raped by local cadres. *Geming qingnian*, no. 1 (September 19, 1967), AC.
86. Both instances were reported in *Geming qingnian*, November 10, 1967, AC.
87. “Chaling laixin” [Letter from Chaling], *ibid.*

88. Hunan difangzhi bianzhan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi*, vol. 7, *Zonghe jingji (laodong)*, 67.
89. See Gong Xiaoxia, “Perpetual Victims: Persecution of the ‘Bad Classes’ during the Cultural Revolution,” *China Information* 11, nos. 2–3 (1996): 44–47; and Yang Su, “Mass Killings in the Cultural Revolution: A Study of Three Provinces,” in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 107–109, 117–118.
90. The following is drawn mainly from Tan Hecheng, *Xuede shenghua: Gongyuan 1967 nian Hunan Daoxian wenge datusha jishi* [The bloody myth: An account of the 1967 Dao County massacre during the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Tianxingjian chubanshe, 2010), an exhaustive study of the violence that broke out in the region.
91. Xiangjiang fenglei zhishu zhantuan, *Tingjin bao* [Advance], no. 6 (October 8, 1967), AC.
92. Xie Chengnian, “Daoxian wenge sharen yiliu wenti chuli jingguo” [Handling of the Cultural Revolution killing incidents at Dao County], *Yanhuang chunqiu* [China through the ages], no. 10 (2010): 43.
93. Tan Hecheng, *Xuede shenghua*, 33–34.
94. *Ibid.*, 550. Although sporadic killings continued, large-scale violence stopped in October 1967 as a result of direct PLA intervention. Between mid-August and mid-October, 4,519 were killed in Dao County alone (1.2 percent of its population), of whom 1,830 allegedly were landlords and rich peasants, and 2,207 were family members. In the whole prefecture, over 9,000 people were killed, and some 14,000 were involved in carrying out the killings. Among those killed, over 7,600 were either of the black categories or their family members, about 1,000 were poor peasants with blemished political history, and the remainder had other class statuses, such as craftsmen, students, or even workers. *Ibid.*, 33–34.
95. The major ones included the Mountain Eagle Regiment, the Anti-persecution Society, the Red Peasant Association, the Red Frontline, and the Middle-School Graduate Red Flag Liaison Post, among others.
96. Xie Jihe, “Wenge zhong de Changsha shangshan xiexiang zhiqing yundong: Ji wozai wenge zhong de yiduan jingli” [Rusticated youth movement in Changsha during the Cultural Revolution: Stories of my experience] (unpublished manuscript).
97. Zhang Yang, “Wo dangnian yanjiu shangshan xiexiang” [How I scrutinized “Up to the Mountains and down to the Villages” movement during the Cultural Revolution] (unpublished manuscript).
98. *Shanying* [The mountain eagle], October 17, 1967, AC.
99. “Zhonggong zhongyang, guowuyuan, zhongyang junwei, zhongyang wenge xiaozu guanyu xiexiang shangshan de zhishi qingnian he qita renyuan bixu jianchi zai nongcun zhua geming cu shengchan de jinji tongzhi” [Urgent notice of the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, the CMC and the CCRG regarding the rusticated youths’ resolutely persisting in grasping revolution and promoting production in the countryside], October 8, 1967, in *CRDB*.

100. See “Shengwulian zui’e shi,” 7.
101. *Hunan jianxun*, no. 33 (October 14, 1967).
102. Stanley Rosen, *The Role of Sent-Down Youth in the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Case of Guangzhou* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 59.
103. “Tianxia zhiqing shi yijia” [All rusticated youth under the heaven are one family], in *Changsha wenshi: Zhishi qingnian shangshan xiexiang shiliao zhuanji* [Changsha cultural and historical materials: Special issue of historical materials on rustication of urban youth], ed. Changshashi zhengxie wenjiao weiti he wenshi weiyuanhui (Changsha, 2004), 257–262.
104. The above is based on Changshashi pingxia zhongnong geming zaofanpai daibiao dahui et al., “Yuhuaguo nongchang zhiqing chongji jiaoku jiguan” [Rusticates of the Yuhuaguo State Farm storming the suburban government offices] (handbill, November 22, 1967), AC; and Changsha shijiao nongzong et al., “Qianglie kangyi Yuhuaguo nongchang zhiqing baotou dazaqiang” [Strongly protesting mobs of the Yuhuaguo State Farm wrecking state properties] (handbill, November 11, 1967), AC.
105. Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, eds., *Wenhua dageming he tade yiduan sichao* [Heterodox currents of thought in the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1997) (hereafter Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*), 278. An English translation of selections from the text can be found in Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left: At Home and Abroad* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1969), 82–100. I have consulted and modified the translation in Mehnert’s volume.
106. After being released from prison in 1978, Yang Xiguang was unable to find employment because of his notoriety as the author of the article “Whither China?” He changed his first name back to Xiaokai—his original birth name—in order to avoid political attention.
107. Interview of Wu Yingheng by the author, July 2010.
108. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 268.
109. Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing et al., “Shengwulian huaitoutou fan’geming dashiji” [Chronology of counterrevolutionary activities by the Shengwulian’s evil bosses] (pamphlet, January 10, 1968), AC.
110. Hongweibing Changshashi yizhong geming zaofan weiyuanhui, “Gei Yang Hui de xin (zhailu)” [Excerpts of the letter to Yang Hui], July 4, 1967, in “Guanyu Shengwulian yizhong gang 3 19 bingtuan fan’geming fenzi Yang Xiguang de diyipi ziliao” [First batch of materials regarding counterrevolutionary Yang Xiguang of the Shengwulian Steel March 19 Regiment] (pamphlet, February 14, 1968), AC.
111. See Unger, “Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang,” 12. Yang admitted that had his parents not been attacked, he probably would have joined one of the Red Guard groups organized in accordance with the bloodline criterion.
112. *Ibid.*, 14.
113. Unger, “Whither China?,” 16; see also Yang Xiguang, *Niugui sheshen lu* [Stories of cow demons and snake spirits] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4–5.

114. Yang Xiaokai, “‘Zhongguo xiang hechu qu?’ dazibao shimo” [Story of the poster “Whither China?”], *Zhongguo zhichun* [China spring], no. 91 (1990): 42.
115. Unger, “Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang,” 16.
116. *Ibid.*
117. Yang Xiaokai, “‘Zhongguo xiang hechu qu?’ dazibao shimo.”
118. See Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 248–256.
119. In “Shengwulian zui’e shi.”
120. Yang Xiaokai, “‘Zhongguo xiang hechu qu?’ dazibao shimo,” 42. Yang was also in correspondence with dissident activists in other parts of China, such as the self-claimed ultraleftists in Shandong and members of the May 16 group in Beijing, which attempted to target Premier Zhou Enlai in defiance of Mao’s wish, as well as to instigate opposition to the army. For Yang’s ties with ultraleftists elsewhere in the country, see Hongweibing Changshashi yizhong geming zaofan weiyuanhui, “Guanyu Shengwulian yizhong gang 319 bingtuan fan’geming fenzi Yang Xiguang de diyipi ziliao”; and Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing et al., “Shengwulian huaitoutou fan’geming dashiji,” AC. For the alleged May 16 conspiracy, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, chap. 13; and Barry Burton, “The Cultural Revolution’s Ultraleft Conspiracy: The ‘May 16 Group,’” *Asian Survey* 11, no. 11 (1971): 1029–1053.
121. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 325.
122. *Ibid.*, 325–326.
123. “Gei Qiu Lingming de xin” [Letter to Qiu Liming], November 23, 1967, in Hongweibing Changshashi yizhong geming zaofan weiyuanhui, “Guanyu Shengwulian yizhong gang 319 bingtuan fan’geming fenzi Yang Xiguang de diyipi ziliao,” AC.
124. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 326.
125. *Ibid.*, 291.
126. *Ibid.*, 326, 329.
127. *Ibid.*, 326.
128. *Ibid.*, 327.
129. Interview of Wu Yingheng by the author, August 2010. Wu was a classmate of Yang Xiguang and accompanied him on several trips to the countryside. A local government document acknowledged that widespread physical violence by local officials against the peasants “is a very serious situation,” and that in some communes “‘beating frenzy’ is like an evil wind sweeping through society from the top down.” Zhou Xun, *The Great Famine in China, 1958–1962: A Documentary History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 31–32.
130. Unger, “Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang.” Some of the targeted cadres even established or joined rebel groups during the Cultural Revolution, claiming that they had suffered injustice in these campaigns.
131. Mao Zedong sixiang yiwan nongxie, “Mao Zedong sixiang yiwan nongxie de geming zaofan gangling” [Program of revolutionary rebellion of the Mao Zedong Thought Association of Hundreds of Millions of Peasants] (handbill, September 23, 1967), AC.

132. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 5 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 339–384. The phrase “Whither China?” also appeared in a *Red Flag* editorial in mid-August 1967. See *Hongqi*, no. 13 (August 17, 1967): 4. In his opening paragraph, Yang also appropriated the prose of the opening paragraph of Mao’s essay.
133. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 274.
134. For the Cultural Revolution’s first wall poster, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, 54–58.
135. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 274–275.
136. *Ibid.*, 276–277. Yang remarked in an interview over two decades later, “The Manifesto [of the April 3 group] said that the target of the Cultural Revolution is the redistribution of property and the overthrow of the privileged class. I compared this with what I had experienced in the January Revolution. I felt that the privileged class had been overturned then. Those who had had power before now were cleaning toilets, had been forced to become ordinary people.” Unger, “Transcript of Interviews with Yang Xiguang.”
137. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 279.
138. *Ibid.*, 282.
139. *Ibid.*, 280.
140. *Ibid.*, 287–288.
141. *Ibid.*, 286–287.
142. *Ibid.*, 289.
143. Mao Zedong sixiang hongweibing et al., “Shengwulian huaitoutou fan’geming dashiji,” AC.
144. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 294.
145. *Ibid.*, 312. I thank Christopher Fox for the draft translation of the essay.
146. *Ibid.*, 315.
147. *Ibid.*, 314–315.
148. *Ibid.*, 316.
149. *Ibid.*, 314–316.
150. For Zhou’s speeches, see Hunansheng qixiangju hongqi zongbu, ed., *Beiming ji* [A collection of hysterical howling] (Changsha, February 1968), 40–48, AC.
151. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 301.
152. *Ibid.*, 300.
153. *Ibid.*, 301–302. *Li* is a Chinese measure of distance. One *li* is equivalent to 0.5 kilometer.
154. *Ibid.*, 279.
155. *Ibid.*, 290.
156. *Ibid.*, 288.
157. Chen Yinan, *Qingchun wuheng*, 302.
158. “Zhongyang shouzhang jiejian Mao Zedong sixiang xuexiban Hunan ban quanti tongzhi de jianghua” [Speeches by party leaders at the meeting with all the comrades of the Hunan group of the Mao Zedong Thought study class], January 24, 1968, in *CRDB*. English translations of excerpts from several party leaders’ speeches are collected in Mehnert, *Peking and the New Left*, 107–118.

159. “Zhaojian shoudu hongdaihui ‘wu da lingxiu’ shi de tanhua” [Mao’s talk at the meeting with the “Five Capital Red Guard Leaders”], July 28, 1968, in CRDB.
160. Yu Laishan, *Mao Zedong wushi ci hui Hunan* [Mao Zedong’s fifty visits to Hunan] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2009), 309.
161. *Hunan ribao*, January 27, 1968.
162. *Xin Changsha bao*, March 2, 1968.
163. According to an eyewitness, “Whither China?” was copied on several dozen large sheets of paper and prominently exhibited in downtown Changsha with a warning message that read “For criticism only” and with Yang Xiguang’s name crossed out in red ink, which denoted a capital sentence in Chinese judicial practice. Thousands of people who had previously been unfamiliar with the Shengwulian developments were therefore exposed to these heretical views. Interview of Wu Yingheng by the author, June 2010.
164. For details of Yang’s capture, see Changshashi yizhong hongzaohui, “Fan’geming Yang Xiguang luowang ji” [How the counterrevolutionary Yang Xiguang was captured] (handbill, February 27, 1968), AC. Zhou Guohui, the other Shengwulian leader, was arrested after having hidden among sympathetic rusticates and was subjected to over sixty denunciation meetings and repeatedly beaten.
165. *Xin Changsha bao*, February 12 and March 12, 1968.
166. Hunan difangzhi bianzhuhan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi*, vol. 1, *Dashiji*, 798.
167. *Hunan ribao*, April 10 and 13, 1968.
168. For an insightful discussion of such dynamically linked processes of political and ideological transformation that has much shaped my understanding of conflicts in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, see Marshall Sahlins, “Structural Work: How Microhistories Become Macrohistories and Vice Versa,” *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 1 (2005): 5–30.
169. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 8.

6. Coping with Crisis in the Wake of the Cultural Revolution

1. Song Yongyi and Sun Dajin, eds., *Wenhua dageming he tade yiduan sichao* [Heterodox currents of thought in the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Tianyuan shuwu, 1997) (hereafter Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*), 419–420, 425–430. See also *Fudan zhanbao* [Fudan battle bulletin], nos. 40, 41, and 61 (March 25, March 26, and May 30, 1968), in Center for Chinese Research Materials, *A New Collection of Red Guard Publications, Part 3: A Comprehensive Compilation of Tabloids in the Provinces*, ed. Song Yongyi (Oakton, VA: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 2005) (hereafter CCRM [2005]), 14:5901–5910, 5985–5988. The term “madman” apparently was drawn from Lu Xun’s famous short story “A Madman’s Diary” (1918), in which the protagonist fiercely criticizes conventional morality.

2. See Hunan jianxun bianjibu, “Fan’geming dazahui Shengwulian zui’e shi” [A history of crimes perpetrated by the counterrevolutionary hodgepodge Shengwulian], *Hunan jianxun* [Hunan news bulletin], nos. 71–73 (March 1968): 4, AC.
3. *Hong Er San zhanbao* [Red February 3 battle bulletin], no. 38 (April 8, 1968), in CCRM (2005), 22:9423–9424; see also Yin Hongbiao, *Shizongzhe de zuji: Wenhua dageming qijian de qingnian sichao* [Footsteps of the missing: Currents of youth thought during the Cultural Revolution] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2009), 118–121.
4. For the Big Dipper Society in Wuhan, see Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 335–364; Shaoguang Wang, “‘New Trends of Thought’ during the Cultural Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 8, no. 21 (1999): 207–214; and Yin Hongbiao, *Shizongzhe de zuji*, 113–117.
5. Qiao Jianwu and Du Wenge, “Gei dangzhongyang Mao Zhuxi guowuyuan de gongkaixin: Zao san’ge dafan” [Three great rebellions: An open letter to the Party Center, Chairman Mao, and the State Council], August 30, 1960, in *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database], ed. Song Yongyi et al., 3rd ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010) (hereafter CRDB).
6. Li Wenbo, “Gongshe yi bushi yuanlai yiyi shang de guojia le” [The commune is no longer a state in its original sense], October 17, 1966, in CRDB.
7. For the open letter, see Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 233–240. For Lin Biao’s remarks concerning “Bombard the headquarters,” see *Renmin ribao* [People’s daily] (hereafter RMRB), September 16, 1966.
8. “Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan zai ‘gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang weida hongqi, jinyibu kaizhan sanjiehe duoquan douzheng shishi dahui’ shang de jianghua” [Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan’s talk at the “Holding High the Banner of Mao Zedong Thought, Further the Struggle of Power Seizure through Three-in-One Unity” oath-taking rally], February 24, 1967, in CRDB.
9. Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 181.
10. Joel Andreas, personal communication.
11. Gordon Chang, “China in Revolt,” *Commentary* 122, no. 5 (2006): 33–34.
12. Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 298–300.
13. Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 125.
14. Graham Young, “On the Mass Line,” *Modern China* 6, no. 2 (1980): 225–240.
15. Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 347. For a richly documented study of the Mao cult during the Cultural Revolution, see Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

16. *Zhengdang jiandang xuexi cailiao xuanbian* [Selected study materials for party rectification and building] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1970), 26–27.
17. Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 295.
18. *RMRB*, January 1, 1968.
19. *RMRB*, February 25 and March 1, 1968.
20. The official newspaper *Southern Daily* reported that many students cared little any longer about anything, be it Chairman Mao, the country, politics, or even their own future. Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger, “Students and Class Warfare: The Social Roots of the Red Guard Conflict in Guangzhou (Canton),” *China Quarterly*, no. 83 (1980): 443.
21. Xu Xiao, ed., *Minjian shuxin: Zhongguo minjian sixiang shilu* [Correspondences of ordinary people: A real record of popular thought in China] (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 2000), 97–98. Zhang Yuhai, the author of the letter, was a former member of the April 3 Faction in Beijing (see Chapter 3). Rusticated in Yunnan in late 1968, he crossed into Burma in March 1969 and joined the Burmese Communist Party guerrilla force. For a semifictional account of the participation of former Red Guards in the Communist guerrilla war in Southeast Asia, see Deng Xian, *Zhongguo zhiqing zhongjie* [How rustication ended in China] (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 2009).
22. Kuai Dafu, leader of one of the student factions at Tsinghua, recalled that upon spotting the workers marching onto the campus, he immediately thought of the scene in August 1967 of “Wang Hongwen leading tens of thousands of [Workers’ General Headquarters (WGHQ)] workers crushing the Lian Si, while Chairman Mao watched the event on live television.” Kuai tracked down Wu De, the mayor of Beijing, and vowed that the students would “fight to the death” if they were to be attacked in the same way in which the Lian Si had been attacked by the WGHQ. Xu Aijing, *Tsinghua Kuai Dafu* [Tsinghua’s Kuai Dafu] (Hong Kong: Zhongguo wenge lishi chubanshe, 2011), 341. For accounts of the Red Guard factionalism at Tsinghua and its final end, see Tang Shaojie, *Yi ye zhi qiu: Tsinghua daxue 1968 nian “bairi dawudou”* [An episode of the Cultural Revolution: The “Hundred-Day War” at Tsinghua University in 1968] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), chaps. 7–8; William Hinton, *Hundred Day War: The Cultural Revolution at Tsinghua University* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972); and Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), chaps. 4–6.
23. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949–1976* [Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2003) (hereafter *MZDZ, 1949–1976*), 2:1522. Mao reportedly personally reviewed the plan of attack, instructing that the workers should enter the Tsinghua campus through the south, west, and east entrances. Xu Aijing, *Tsinghua Kuai Dafu*, 343.

24. Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 176.
25. The transcript of the conversation between Mao and the student leaders is collected in *CRDB*.
26. Joel Andreas, “Institutionalized Rebellion: Governing Tsinghua University during the Late Years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution,” *China Journal*, no. 55 (2006): 3.
27. The mangoes, exotic in China, were presented to Mao as a state gift by Arshad Husain, the Pakistani foreign minister. For a few examples of official news reports on the mango affair, see *RMRB*, August 7, 8, and 10, September 8 and 20, and October 7 and 20; see also *Peking Review*, no. 32 (August 9, 1968): 5–6. For accounts of the mango affair in late 1968 and early 1969, see Alfreda Murck, “Golden Mangoes—The Life Cycle of a Cultural Revolution Symbol,” *Archives of Asian Art*, no. 57 (2007): 1–22; and Leese, *Mao Cult*, 219–223.
28. See *Hongqi*, no. 2 (August 25, 1968): 3–7.
29. In late 1968, over 28,000 workers and 19,000 PLA personnel were dispatched to universities and colleges, middle schools, and primary schools in Beijing alone. Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing bianjibu, ed., *Dangdai Beijing dashiji (1949–2003)* [Chronology of major events in contemporary Beijing (1949–2003)] (Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe, 2003), 240, 243.
30. Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 52. Walder and Su estimated that between 75 and 80 percent of killings, injuries, and political persecutions occurred after the establishment of revolutionary committees. “This means that the vast majority of casualties were not the result of rampaging Red Guards or even of armed combat between mass organizations competing for power. Instead, they appear to have been the result of organized action by new organs of political and military power.” Andrew Walder and Yang Su, “The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside: Scope, Timing and Human Impact,” *China Quarterly*, no. 173 (2003): 98.
31. Xi Xuan and Jin Chunming, “*Wenhua dageming*” *jianshi* [A brief history of the “Great Cultural Revolution”], 3rd ed. (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2006), 167–169.
32. *RMRB*, September 7, 1968.
33. For example, the percentage of PLA officers chairing revolutionary committees at the county level or above was 81 percent in Guangdong, 84 percent in Liaoning, 97 percent in Yunnan, 98 percent in Hubei, 78 percent in Beijing, and 95 percent in Shanxi. Nationally, over 5,000 army personnel served as chairmen or vice chairmen of revolutionary committees at the county level or above, while as many as 50,000 served as committee members. Junshi kexueyuan junshi lishi yanjiubu, *Zhongguo renming jiefangjun quanshi* [The complete history of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army] (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 2000), 1:374. For more discussion of the role of the PLA, see Jürgen Domes, “The Role of the Military in the Formation of Revolutionary Committees, 1967–68,” *China Quarterly*, no. 44 (1970): 112–145.

34. In one of the formulas of the class-cleansing campaign, “three checks” (*sancha*) would constitute the starting point: (1) “check the behind-the-scenes activities of capitalist roaders,” (2) “check up on renegades and special agents,” and (3) “check for destructive acts by unreformed landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad people, and rightists.” Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 254. For a study of the operation of special-case investigations at the national level, see Michael Schoenhals, “The Central Case Examination Group, 1966–1979,” *China Quarterly*, no. 145 (1996): 87–111.
35. Dangdai Zhongguo de Beijing bianjibu, *Dangdai Beijing dashiji* (1949–2003), 242–243. In an updated report issued three months later, 18,900 more class enemies were added. *Ibid.*, 246. In July 1968, the new leadership in Guangdong estimated in a report that 420,000 “social dregs and KMT remnants” (about 1 percent of the provincial population) had actively engaged in sabotage activities, and many might have already “infiltrated the enterprises, party and mass organizations, and cultural institutions.” Mao commented on the report: “Guangdong is no exception, the situations elsewhere in the country are mostly the same.” *MZDZ, 1949–1976*, 2:1518.
36. Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangshi yanjiushi, *Zhonggong Shanghai dangshi dadian* [An encyclopedia of CCP party history in Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 128, 132.
37. Hunan difangzhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi* [Hunan provincial gazetteer], vol. 1, *Dashiji* [Chronology of events] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1999), 801.
38. Hunan difangzhi bianzhuan weiyuanhui, *Hunan shengzhi* [Hunan provincial gazetteer], vol. 6, *Zhengfazhi (shengpan)* [Politics and law (trial)] (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1995), 265–266.
39. Richard Kraus, *The Cultural Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16.
40. Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China*.
41. “Beijingshi geming weiyuanhui guanyu tigao geming jingtixing jianjue tong fan’geming yaoyan zuodouzhang de tongzhi” [Directive of the Beijing Municipal Revolutionary Committee on heightening revolutionary vigilance and resolutely opposing counterrevolutionary rumors], July 18, 1968, in *CRDB*.
42. *RMRB*, August 13, 1968. For similar statements, see *RMRB*, August 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15. For the campaign against “multiple centers” in Hunan, see *Xin Changsha bao* [New Changsha daily], August 11, 19, and 21, 1968.
43. Lowell Dittmer, *Liu Shao-Ch’i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 155. In fact, Liu was the only one named and condemned in the plenum’s communiqué. Even Deng Xiaoping, the “other power holder in the party taking the capitalist road,” remained unnamed and was to be rehabilitated a few years later.
44. *Hongqi*, no. 5 (November 24, 1968): 28–29; Zhongyang zhuan’an shencha xiaozu, “Guanyu pantu, neijian, gongzei Liu Shaoqi zuixing de shencha

- baogao” [Report regarding the crimes of Liu Shaoqi, the renegade, traitor, and scab], November 18, 1968, in *CRDB*.
45. *Hongqi*, no. 5 (May 1, 1969): 36.
 46. *RMRB*, March 23, 1968; see also *Hongqi*, no. 4 (March 30, 1970): 14.
 47. In early March 1969, Mao remarked in reference to the official procedure of ratifying party documents, effectively decreeing the dissolution of the CCRG: “There’s no need to include the CCRG [as the signatory at the end of official documents]. The CCRG is in charge of the Cultural Revolution. Now that it’s about to end, let’s use the Politburo’s Standing Committee instead.” *MZDZ*, 1949–1976, 2:1547.
 48. Donald W. Klein and Lois Hager, “The Ninth Central Committee,” *China Quarterly*, no. 45 (1971): 52.
 49. For the rustication movement of 1968–1978, see Thomas Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Michel Bonnin, *The Lost Generation: The Rustification of China’s Educated Youth (1968–1980)*, trans. Krystyna Horko (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013).
 50. For the Lin Biao affair and its political impact, see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, chaps. 19–20; Jin Qiu, *The Culture of Power: The Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Standard University Press, 1999); and Frederick Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), chap. 1.
 51. *MZDZ*, 1949–1976, 2:1605.
 52. Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 217–218.
 53. Ye Weili and Ma Xiaodong, *Growing Up in the People’s Republic: Conversations between Two Daughters of China’s Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 109.
 54. See Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 212–219.
 55. Keith Forster, *Rebellion and Factionalism in a Chinese Province: Zhejiang, 1966–1976* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), chaps. 7–9; Shaoguang Wang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995), chaps. 10–11.
 56. *MZDZ*, 1949–1976, 2:1644.
 57. From an economic standpoint, the Cultural Revolution was, as a leading expert on the Chinese economy noted, “surprisingly, not a particularly important event” because it had “relatively little effect on the economy.” Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 75. For the Chinese economy during the Mao era in general, see Carl Riskin, *China’s Political Economy: The Quest for Development since 1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

58. Naughton, *Chinese Economy*, 80.
59. Between 1957 and 1977, average wages in state industries declined some 20 percent. By 1978, average housing space for urban residents had shrunk to only 3.6 square meters per person, down from 4.3 square meters in 1952. Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism*, 194.
60. For a richly documented study of everyday life during the Cultural Revolution, see Jin Dalu, *Feichang yu zhengchang: Shanghai wenge shiqi de shehui shenghuo* [Ordinary and extraordinary: Social life in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution], 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011).
61. Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978–1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 62.
62. Marie-Claire Bergère, “China’s Urban Society after Mao,” in *Chinese Politics after Mao*, ed. Jürgen Domes (Swansea, Wales: University College Cardiff Press, 1979), 160–161.
63. See Teiwes and Sun, *End of the Maoist Era*, 66–74.
64. For the notion of “primitive rebels,” see Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Norton, 1965).
65. Wang Xizhe, “Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution,” in *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates*, ed. Anita Chan, Stanley Rosen, and Jonathan Unger (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 238.
66. Liu Guokai, *A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Revolution*, trans. Anita Chan (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1987), 144.
67. For underground literary and political activities during Mao’s last years, see Yang Jian, *Zhongguo zhiqing wenxueshi* [A literary history of the rusticated youth movement] (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2002), chaps. 4–6; Yin Hongbiao, *Shizongzhe de zuji*, chaps. 4–6; Maghiel van Crevel, “Underground Poetry in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Modern Chinese Literature* 9, no. 2 (1996): 169–219; Bonnie S. McDougall, “Underground Literature: Two Reports from Hong Kong,” *Contemporary China* 3, no. 4 (1979): 80–90; Bonnie S. McDougall, “Dissent Literature: Official and Nonofficial Literature in and About China in the Seventies,” *Contemporary China* 3, no. 4 (1979): 49–79.
68. Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52.
69. For a brief history of Li Yizhe, see Chan, Rosen, and Unger, *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System*, 1–28. See also Lin Zhongjian, *Wo yu Li Yizhe* [Li Yizhe and I] (Taipei: Zhonghua ribaoshe, 1978); and Ding Wang and Li Yizhe, *Li Yizhe dazibao* [Wall posters of Li Yizhe] (Hong Kong: Mingbao chubanshe, 1976).
70. Chan, Rosen, and Unger, *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System*, 62; translation slightly modified. The original Chinese text of “On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System” is reprinted in Song and Sun, *Yiduan sichao*, 476–493.

71. Chan, Rosen, and Unger, *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System*, 75; translation modified.
72. *Ibid.*, 35–36.
73. *Ibid.*, 36.
74. *Ibid.*, 63.
75. The views of Li Yizhe were vehemently denounced by both local and national leaderships. Mao's wife Jiang Qing remarked that Li Yizhe's "On Socialist Democracy" was "the most reactionary article yet since Liberation." *Ibid.*, 12. The party's rebuttal charged that the group propagated a false image of a self-perpetuating bureaucratic class, and that its ulterior purpose in advocating mass democracy was to discard the leadership of the party and subvert the Cultural Revolution. For the party-led attacks on Li Yizhe, see *ibid.*, 12–15, 87–105.
76. Chen Erjin, *China: Crossroads Socialism, an Unofficial Manifesto for Proletarian Democracy*, trans. Robin Munro (London: Verso, 1984), 142.
77. *Ibid.*, chaps. 5–6.
78. *Ibid.*, 25–26; translation slightly modified.
79. *Ibid.*, 123.
80. Kjeld Erik Brodsgaard, "The Democracy Movement in China, 1978–1979: Opposition Movements, Wall Poster Campaigns, and Underground Journals," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 7 (1981): 751.
81. For the English version of Zhang's article, see Zhang Chunqiao, "On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship over the Bourgeoisie," *Peking Review*, no. 14 (April 4, 1975): 5–11. For official Chinese Marxist discussions of the "bourgeois right" and "dictatorship of the proletariat," see Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 399–402; and Teiwes and Sun, *End of the Maoist Era*, 282–291.
82. Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, 402.
83. Michael Frolic, *Mao's People: Sixteen Portraits of Life in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 261–262.
84. The critical context was the prevalent sense among the populace that the late Zhou Enlai had not been properly honored. Tensions snowballed after the premier's death in early January and were exacerbated by the government's decision to prohibit popular displays of mourning. For more detail, see Sebastian Heilmann, "The Suppression of the April 5th Movement and the Persecution of 'Counterrevolutionaries' in 1976," *Issues and Studies* 30, no. 1 (1994): 37–64; and Teiwes and Sun, *End of the Maoist Era*, 466–488. For poems produced during the April 5 Movement, see Tong Huaizhou, ed., *Tiananmen shiwenji* [Collection of poems and essays produced during the Tiananmen Incident], 2 vols. (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1979).
85. RMRB, April 8, 1976.
86. Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China: Political Reform in the Deng Xiaoping Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 40–41.
87. For eyewitness accounts of the movement by foreign journalists and diplomats, see Roger Garside, *Coming Alive: China after Mao* (New York: Mentor,

- 1982); John Fraser, *The Chinese: Portrait of a People* (New York: Summit Books, 1981); and Richard Thwaites, *Real Life China, 1978–1983* (Sidney: William Collins, 1986). For two informative analyses that situate the movement in the context of the Cultural Revolution, see Brodsgaard, “Democracy Movement in China”; and Stanley Rosen, “Guangzhou’s Democracy Movement in Cultural Revolution Perspective,” *China Quarterly*, no. 101 (1985): 1–31.
88. See Garside, *Coming Alive*, 212–213. This 0538 was never identified but has since become a legend in the political history of contemporary China.
89. *Globe and Mail*, December 27, 1978.
90. Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 72–73.
91. For a personal recollection of the movement in Guangzhou, see Liu Guokai, *Caogen chanming* [Voices from the grass roots] (New York: Meiguo guoji chubanshe, 2003), 390–452.
92. *Globe and Mail*, December 27, 1978.
93. For a collection of documents on the Democracy Wall Movement, see Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, ed., *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian* [Collection of underground publications circulated on the Chinese mainland], 20 vols. (Taipei: Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, 1980–1985). For an annotated catalog of major underground publications, see Chen Ruoxi, *Democracy Wall and the Unofficial Journals: An Annotated Bibliography* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1982).
94. *Globe and Mail*, February 24, 1979. Another poster strongly criticized Pol Pot, the Chinese-supported Cambodian leader: “Pol Pot claimed to be a Marxist and Communist, but communism is a humanist doctrine. Was there ever a more barbarous regime than this? The Cambodian people cannot stand to be enslaved from either the inside or the outside. . . . Cambodia also wants human rights and democracy and the Cambodians themselves must be allowed to solve their own problems.” *Globe and Mail*, March 3, 1979.
95. Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 14.
96. *Globe and Mail*, December 8 and 9, 1978.
97. These two texts are collected in James D. Seymour, ed., *The Fifth Modernization: China’s Human Rights Movement, 1978–1979* (Stanfordville, NY: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, 1980), 227–244.
98. *Ibid.*, 83–86. For the original Chinese text, see “Zhongguo renquan xuanyan: Shijiu tiao” [A nineteen-point declaration of human rights in China], in Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe, *Dalu dixia kanwu huibian*, 2:187–190.
99. Charles Taylor, ed., *China Hands: The “Globe and Mail” in Peking* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 254. The municipal authorities had to permit the peasants to establish a shantytown not far from the Great Hall of the People in the heart of the capital, acknowledged that they had suffered mistreatment, and promised that their cases would be investigated. *Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1979.

100. *Globe and Mail*, December 16, 1978. For the rusticates' protests in other cities, see Liu Xiaomeng, *Zhongguo zhiqing shi: Dachao, 1966–1980* [A history of the rusticated youth movement in China: Great waves, 1966–1980] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), 723–799. For protests in Shanghai, see Anne McLaren, "The Educated Youth Return: The Poster Campaign in Shanghai from November 1978 to March 1979," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 2 (1979): 1–20; and Thomas B. Gold, "Back to the City: The Return of Shanghai's Educated Youth," *China Quarterly*, no. 84 (1980): 755–770.
101. Deng made the remark in a meeting with the American journalist Robert D. Novak on November 27, 1978. The same evening, Deng's words were relayed by John Fraser, Beijing correspondent of the *Globe and Mail*, to a large crowd of over 10,000, who "shouted with joy and relief" and sang the Chinese national anthem as well as the "Internationale," the rousing anthem of the international socialist movement. See Fraser, *Chinese*, 242; and Robert D. Novak, *The Prince of Darkness: 50 Years Reporting in Washington* (New York: Crown Forum, 2007), 325–329.
102. Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1982)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982), 155–156.
103. For official justification of the abolition, see *Beijing Review*, no. 40 (October 6, 1980): 22–29.
104. For political and ideological crackdowns in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Baum, *Burying Mao*, chap. 3; Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China*, chaps. 3–5.
105. Xia Xingzhen and Cheng Zhongyuan, *Lishi zhuanzhe de qianzou: Deng Xiaoping zai 1975* [Prelude to the turning point of history: Deng Xiaoping in 1975] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2003). For an analysis of the dispute between Deng and the Maoist clique in 1975, see Alessandro Russo, "How Did the Cultural Revolution End? The Last Dispute between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, 1975," *Modern China* 39, no. 3 (2013): 239–279.
106. Barry Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978–1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67.
107. *Xinhua yuebao* [New China Monthly], no. 401 (March 1978): 9.
108. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution: 1917–1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 122.
109. See Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan*, 70–74.
110. James T. Myers, Jürgen Domes, and Milton D. Yeh, eds., *Chinese Politics: Documents and Analysis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 3:344.
111. Quoted in Garside, *Coming Alive*, 387.
112. Qian Yingyi and Wu Jinglian, "China's Transition to a Market Economy: How Far across the River?" (Working Paper no. 69, Center for Research on Economic Development and Policy Reform, Stanford University, 2000), 8.
113. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 222. For Gramsci's notion of passive revolution, see Christine Buci-Gluckmann,

“State, Transition and Passive Revolution,” in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); and Adam David Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

114. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 119.

115. *Ibid.*, 59.

Epilogue

1. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 81–83.
2. Pun Ngai and Chris King-chi Chan, “The Subsumption of Class Discourse in China,” *Boundary 2* 35, no. 2 (2008): 75–91.
3. E. P. Thompson, “Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?,” *Social History* 3, no. 1 (1978): 149.
4. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.
5. William Hinton, *The Great Reversal: The Privatization of China, 1978–1989* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990).
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8. Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 120.
9. Wang Hui, *China’s New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, trans. Theodore Hutters (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 151.
10. Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 190.
11. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 31.
12. Richard Smith, “The Chinese Road to Capitalism,” *New Left Review*, 1st series, 199 (1993): 71.
13. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 17.
14. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 177.
15. William Hinton, “What Went Wrong?,” *Monthly Review* 43, no. 1 (1991): 16. The metaphor was derived from Mao’s writings during the early 1930s.
16. Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1999), 455–456.
17. For the fragmentation of China’s private entrepreneurs and their dependence on the political ruling elite, see Kellee S. Tsai, *Capitalism without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); and Bruce J. Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

18. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). For studies of appropriation of public assets and various forms of cadre corruption, see Yan Sun, *Corruption and Market in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Xiaobo Lü, *Cadres and Corruption: The Organizational Involvement of the Chinese Communist Party* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Andrew Wedeman, *Double Paradox: Rapid Growth and Rising Corruption in China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).
19. Jean C. Oi, “The Role of the Local State in China’s Transitional Economy,” *China Quarterly*, no. 144 (1995): 1132–1149; Nan Lin, “Local Market Socialism: Local Corporation in Action in Rural China,” *Theory and Society* 24, no. 3 (1995): 301–354.
20. The official national inflation rate for 1988 was 19 percent, triple the rate of the previous year. The actual inflation rate was probably in the range of 25 to 30 percent and significantly higher in the cities. The burden fell hardest on those dependent on state salaries, and real income declined for a significant portion of the urban population. Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978–1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 386.
21. Anita Chan, “China’s Long Winter,” *Monthly Review* 41, no. 8 (1990): 11. For the workers’ role in the 1989 movement, see Andrew Walder and Gong Xiaoxia, “Workers in the Tiananmen Protests: The Politics of the Beijing Workers’ Autonomous Federation,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (1993): 1–29.
22. For the complex connections between the Cultural Revolution and social protests in post-Mao China, see Elizabeth J. Perry, “‘To Rebel Is Justified’: Cultural Revolution Influences on Contemporary Chinese Protest,” in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered: Beyond Purge and Holocaust*, ed. Kam-ye Law (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 262–281; and Craig Calhoun and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “The Cultural Revolution and the Democracy Movement of 1989: Complexity in Historical Connections,” in Law, *Chinese Cultural Revolution Reconsidered*, 241–261.
23. Andrew Nathan and Perry Link, eds., *The Tiananmen Papers* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), 46.
24. Wang Hui, *China’s New Order*, 58–59. For the close intertwining of economic capital and political power in contemporary China, see Bruce J. Dickson, *Wealth into Power: The Communist Party’s Embrace of China’s Private Sector* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Xiaojun Yan, “To Get Rich Is Not Only Glorious: Economic Reform and the New Entrepreneurial Party Secretaries,” *China Quarterly*, no. 210 (2012): 335–354.
25. Sun Liping, “Societal Transition: New Issues in the Field of the Sociology of Development,” *Modern China* 34, no. 1 (2008): 107.
26. See Elemer Hankiss, *East European Alternatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jadwiga Staniszkis, “‘Political Capitalism’ in Poland,”

- East European Politics and Societies* 5, no. 1 (1990): 127–141; Staniszkis, *The Dynamics of the Breakthrough in Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and David Stark and Laszlo Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
27. For a volume that examines the privatization of the state from a comparative perspective, see Beatrice Hibou, ed., *Privatizing the State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). In a highly controversial work, Giovanni Arrighi discussed the rise of China as a “non-capitalist” alternative to the Euro-American capitalist core and argued provocatively that China’s post-Mao reforms had in effect adopted a strategy of “accumulation without dispossession,” and that “the reforms appear to have consolidated, rather than undermined, the prior achievements of the Chinese Revolution.” Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2007), 353, 361, 371. For a trenchant criticism of Arrighi, see Joel Andreas, “Changing Colors in China,” *New Left Review*, 2nd series, no. 54 (2008): 123–141.
 28. See Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*, trans. Derek Jeffers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
 29. Barry Naughton, for instance, describes China at the end of the Mao era as “having strong economic growth fundamentals, and being poised to achieve acceleration.” Barry Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978–1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 54. See also Chris Bramall, *Sources of Chinese Economic Growth, 1978–1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Lin Chun, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
 30. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), 14. This ostensibly more efficient “China model” of combining authoritarianism, developmentalism, and market imperatives has been tirelessly trumpeted by the propaganda machine of the Chinese state. It has also received praise from an increasing number of commentators in the West. For example, in a *New York Times* op-ed article titled “Why China’s Political Model Is Superior,” the author Eric Li—a venture capitalist—ardently argued how the Chinese political system, in curtail- ing the popular will and participation (and especially in decisively putting down “a vast rebellion” in 1989), is more conducive to economic develop- ment, while “the American way” will be soon driven “over the cliff” by its “faith-based ideological hubris” about democracy and freedom. *New York Times*, February 16, 2012. For a similar argument by a New York Uni- versity economics professor and hedge-fund manager, see Ann Lee, *What the U.S. Can Learn from China: An Open-Minded Guide to Treating Our Great- est Competitor as Our Greatest Teacher* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2012).
 31. Polanyi, *Great Transformation*, 250.

32. For two studies of cultural practices and products during the Cultural Revolution, see Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
33. E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 190.
34. Daniel Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique* (London: Verso, 2002), x.
35. James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), x.
36. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 118.

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